INSTRUCTIONS
ON VOWS




TRANSFERRED

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Après avoir fait examiner avec soin la traduction anglaise du présent *Manuel des Vœux*, et l'avoir trouvée entièrement conforme à l'édition française imprimée à Rome et revêtue de l'*imprimatur* du Maître du sacré palais, nous avons jugé cet ouvrage propre à développer l'esprit religieux non seulement parmi les Frères des Écoles chrétiennes, à qui il est spécialement destiné, mais encore à aider les âmes pieuses qui, par une faveur particulière de l'Esprit-Saint, ont émis les saints Vœux.

Tours, le 1er février 1892.

✝ GUILLAUME-RENÉ,
ARCHEVÊQUE DE TOURS.

INSTRUCTIONS ON VOWS

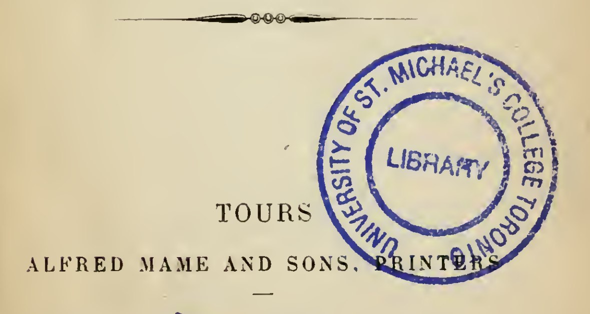
FOR THE USE OF THE BROTHERS

OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

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CHAPTER I.

ON THE RELIGIOUS STATE IN GENERAL.

Art. I. — *Nature of the religious state.*

1. What is a Christian state of life?

It is a fixed and durable manner of life, established for the purpose of obtaining preservation in grace in this world, and the glory of the life to come.

2. How many kinds of Christian states of life are there?

There are two; in the first, we limit ourselves to the observance of the precepts; in the second, we tend to the practice of the counsels.

3. Who has drawn the distinction between the precepts and the counsels?

Our Lord Jesus Christ; after Him, the Apostles and the Holy Church.

4. What is a *precept* or commandment?

It is a divine or ecclesiastical law which man is obliged to obey.

Thus, it is a precept to love God, to hear Mass on Sundays, to refrain from falsehood, etc.

5. What is a counsel?

A counsel is a practice of perfection to which the Gospel invites us, without imposing it as an obligation.

Thus, to give our possessions to the poor, to devote ourselves to the care of the sick, etc., are counsels.

6. What is generally understood by evangelical counsels?

By *evangelical counsels* generally, we understand those which, conformably to the teachings of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Gospel, are proposed to the good will of the faithful, and which embrace the practice of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

7. By what name is that state designated in which we limit ourselves to the practice of the precepts?

It is called the *common life* or simply *Christian life,* and they who embrace it are the *faithful* at large.

8. By what name do we know the state of those who follow the evangelical counsels?

By the name of the *religious state* or the *state of perfection.*

9. Can we be saved equally in these two states?

Yes, and this depends upon one's vocation. It is, nevertheless, certain that the religious life, because of its special conditions, offers more numerous and more efficacious means to work out one's salvation.

10. Is the practice of the three evangelical counsels necessary to constitute the religious state?

Yes, it is necessary, but not sufficient.

11. What else is necessary?

It is necessary : 1° to join to the counsels the vow of accomplishing them ; 2° to make this vow in the presence of some one who has received authority to accept it ; 3° to observe it subject to a Rule approved by the Church.

12. These things premised, how will you now define the religious state?

The *religious state* is a manner of life approved by the Church, in which we make profession of tending to perfection by the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, made according to Rule.

13. Why do you say a manner of life *approved by the Church?*

Because the Church alone can authoritatively determine whether a manner of life is conformable to evangelical perfection; it is also the province of the Church to constitute a religious body, to establish therein what is necessary for its existence, its government, and its development.

14. What do you mean by these words : *of tending to perfection?*

These words signify that the religious is not obliged to be perfect, but to strive to attain the perfection of his state ; so that, should he deter-

mine not to advance, he would positively be unfaithful to the grace of his vocation.

15. What is the perfection to which the religious should tend ?

It is the *perfection of charity*, that is, the perfection of the love of God and of our neighbor.

16. How does the religious tend to this perfection ?

By the exact observance of the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. It is the obligation of the vows which produces the *stability* of the religious life, and *fixes* the soul in the state of perfection.

17. Why do you add : *made according to Rule?*

Because the vows of religion should be made according to the special Rule of the respective Institutes.

In themselves, the vows are essential to the state of perfection, and as such are established in every religious Institute; but their scope is greateror lesser, and he who pronounces them, must so understand them, and engage himself to observe them according to the Rule he has embraced.

18. Who instituted the religious state ?

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in the Gospel, laid down the basis of the religious life; and, in establishing His Church, He provided that she should embrace the common state of life and the state of perfection.

19. Why has Our Lord instituted the religious state?

In order to perpetuate in His Church in a most excellent manner the practice of the three virtues most dear to His Divine Heart, and also to offer to mankind more easy means of attaining holiness.

20. What does St Basil say of the religious state?

StBasil says: "Religious life is a privileged state in which, by a happy and admirable exchange, we give the things of this world for those of heaven, those which pass away for such as are eternal, the land of the dead for that of the living, goods of no value for those of inestimable worth. It is a life in which brief sorrow will merit for us endless joys; a life more angelic than human, and which confers in this world the greatest part possible of eternal felicity."

21. What does St Thomas teach?

St Thomas teaches that in itself it is better, though easier, to embrace the religious state, than to give one's self up in the world to the most rigorous penance during a long period of years.

22. What are the nine fruits of the religious life according to St Bernard?

According to St Bernard, man in holy religion, 1° passes his life more purely; 2° falls more rarely; 3° rises more promptly; 4° walks more prudently; 5° is refreshed more frequently;

6° reposes more surely; 7° dies more confidently; 8° is purified more promptly ; 9° is rewarded more abundantly.

Art. II.— *Various forms of the religious state.*

23. Is the religious state of very remote origin in the Church?

The religious state was professed at the beginning of the Church. There existed, from the times of the Apostles, what is essential to the religious state; that is, there were some who consecrated themselves to God by the three vows of religion, and whose consecration was accepted by the Church and her ministers.

24. Which are the two principal forms under which the religious life is shown in the first ages of the Church?

Religious life, in the primitive ages, was manifested under two principal forms : that of the Cenobites, that is, such as lived in community, and the Anchorets, who lived alone in solitude.

25. How are religious Institutes divided according to the end they have in view?

Religious Institutes are generally divided into three classes : 1° Those who devote themselves more particularly to the *contemplative life ;* 2° Those who devote themselves to the *active life;* 3° Those who profess a *mixed life.*

26. What is the principal object of contemplative Institutes?

To devote themselves to prayer, especially liturgical prayer, to the contemplation of holy things, and to pious austerities, without having the welfare of the faithful as their immediate object.

Such are the religious of St Basil, St Benedict, St Bruno, etc.

27. Are contemplative Institutes useful to our neighbor?

Contemplative Institutes labor most efficaciously for the salvation of souls by prayer, by self-sacrifice, and by the example of the highest virtues. They render themselves useful to our neighbor in many other ways, as their history proves.

28. What is the principal end of active Institutes?

To devote themselves to works of charity for their neighbor, but in view of God and their own personal sanctification.

Such are the Orders of St Camillus de Lellis, of St John of God, etc.

29. Are the active Institutes holy and worthy of praise?

Our Lord regards as done to Himself what is done to the least of His brethren; and, addressing Himself to those who will have assisted Him in the person of the poor, the sick and, captives, He will say to them in the day of judgment: *Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess the king-*

dom prepared for you from the foundation of the world... As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me. (St Matt., xxv., 34, 40.)

30. What should they do who devote themselves to works of charity?

They should borrow from the contemplative life a due measure of spiritual exercises, and strive, by this means, to add to the merits of action the most precious advantages of contemplation. Thus will works of charity be more generous, more persevering, more sanctifying, and become more conducive to the glory of God.

31. What is the mixed life?

It is the union of contemplation and action.

This life, which directly procures for our neighbor a spiritual good and is the outcome of the plenitude of contemplation, is very perfect and excellent. It was that of Our Lord Himself upon earth, of the Apostles and Saints who labored for the salvation of souls.

32. Which are the principal mixed Institutes?

Thy are, in the first place, the *Canons Regular of St Augustine*, and then the four mendicant Orders: the *Carmelites*, the *Dominicans*, the *Franciscans* and the *Hermits of St Augustine*. There are also the *Servites*, the *Minims*, the *Society of Jesus*, etc.

33. In what other manner are religious Institutes divided?

Into *Orders* properly so called, and *religious Congregations*. The first are those who make solemn vows; the others, those who make only simple vows. (See Nos 109 and 110.)

34. Why this diversity of religious Institutes?

To show forth as a whole the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to provide for the various ministries of the Church, and to answer to the varied wants of souls.

They also furnish an occasion for admiring, in the establishment of religious Institutes, how divine Providence causes them to appear at opportune moments.

35. Has each Institute a particular end?

Each Institute has a precise and determined end, in accordance with which it specifies the practices of the religious and regular life.

Thus, in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the Rules are adapted to the exigencies of the ministry of educating children.

36. Should not the particular end be subordinate, in practice, to the essential end of the religious life?

The particular end is but a means of attaining the principal end of the religious life, which is the perfection of charity; hence, a religious should strive to refer all to this principal and essential end, if he would assure the merit of his actions and possess interior peace.

37. What consequences result, for every Institute, from its particular end?

The result is that each has a particular spirit by the very reason of the end which it proposes to attain.

" All Orders, says St Francis of Sales, have a spirit which is common to them, and each has a spirit which is peculiar to itself. The common spirit is the profession which all make to aspire to the perfection of charity; but the peculiar spirit is the means of arriving at that perfection of charity, that is, union of our soul with God and with our neighbor for the love of God. "

Every religious should be well penetrated with the spirit of his vocation, and preserve it with jealous care; thus will he labor efficaciously for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Art. III. — *On vocation to the religious state.*

38. What is vocation in general?

Vocation, in general, is the call of God assigning to everyone the state of life which His providence has destined him.

39. Is it important to follow our vocation?

Yes, because it assures our peace and happiness even in this life, and because special graces for our salvation depend upon it.

"I hold, says St Gregory of Nazianzen, that the choice of a state of life is so important, that it decides our good or bad conduct during the rest of our life."

40. What must we do to know our vocation?

We must pray, have a pure intention, examine our aptitude and attraction, and take counsel.

41. What is the vocation to the religious life?

It is the call of God to the practice of the evangelical counsels (6).

42. Does not Our Lord invite all the faithful in general to the practice of the counsels?

Jesus Christ, replying to the young man who asked what more he should do to be perfect, said to him : *If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow Me.* (St Matt., XIX., 21.) St Thomas teaches that this invitation of Our Lord is addressed to all the faithful.

We may also consider these other words of the Gospel as a general invitation to the practice of the counsels : *And every one that hath left home, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting.* (St Matt., XIX., 29.)

43. In what sense are we to understand this general invitation?

This general invitation is to be understood, not in the sense that there is light and inspiration given effectively to all the faithful to attract them to the state of perfection, but that the invitation is extended to all those who are free to follow it, and that God places at the disposal of those who wish to follow it the necessary help for doing so.

44. Why does Our Lord invite all the faithful to the practice of the counsels?

Because having loved all mankind so much as to give His life for them, there is nothing more in harmony with His love than this invitation to follow the more sure and easy way to attain eternal life.

45. From what has been said, may we engage any one to the practice of the counsels?

According to St Thomas, it is not only permitted to do so, but it is also very meritorious. In support of his assertion, he cites the words of the Angel to Daniel : *They that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity.* (Dan., xii., 3.)

46. Are there not many who have a special vocation to the religious life?

Yes, and this vocation consists in particular graces bestowed upon the soul, and which, by

divine light and interior attraction, lead it to the practice of the counsels.

47. Point out some signs of a religious vocation.

We must look upon a vocation as coming from God, when it is inspired by the fear of His judgments, by the hope of the rewards promised to those who have left all for Our Lord, by the desire of serving our divine Master better in renouncing the joys of the world, and practising poverty and obedience, or by any other supernatural motive.

We may also regard as signs of a special vocation, certain natural dispositions, certain providential events, which incline the will towards the religious life, or at least prepare the soul for the light and inspiration of grace.

48. Is it prudent to take advice before entering religion?

Yes, for prudence dictates that we should not rely solely upon our own light when we are about to arrive at an important decision.

49. Whose advice should we take?

When there is question of a religious vocation, we should not seek the advice of people of the world, because they are more or less imbued with its maxims.

St Thomas says: “ We should consult those who, we know, will not place any obstacle to the designs inspired by God, but who, on the contrary, will aid us in removing the obstacles

that might retard or prevent their accomplishment. "

50. Are we not to expect to be assailed by temptations when we wish to embrace the religious life?

The devil and the world join flesh and blood to prevent souls from heeding the divine call : Shall we have sufficient courage or health to persevere?... Would we not do more good by devoting ourselves to works of charity in the world?... Is it right to grieve our parents, to leave them?... To all these and similar suggestions, we should, without reasoning with our enemy, reply only by prayer, by generosity in our sacrifice, and by entire confidence in God.

51. Is there any reason for doubting of our vocation on account of him who has suggested it?

When we propose to ourselves to embrace the religious life with the view of accomplishing the duties it imposes, and of sanctifying ourselves, we should not doubt that the vocation comes from God, no matter who the person whom God may have employed as an instrument to inspire it. " Even supposing", says St Thomas, " that the devil had urged any one to enter religion, it is a good work and of the kind performed by the holy Angels; hence, there is no danger in following this impulse. God frequently avails Himself of the malice of the devil for the good of His elect."

52. Should we promptly respond to the call of God?

We should certainly do so; for St Liguori eaches, that as soon as God calls any one to a nore perfect state, he should obey, and obey at nce, if he would not imperil his eternal salva-ion. The light which God gives us is transitory, ot permanent; hence, St Thomas says, that the ıvitation to a more perfect life should be follow-d without delay.

53. Is it proper that an examination be made, when e present ourselves for admission to the religious ate?

Yes, an examination should then be made, oth by the aspirant to the religious state, and by ıose to whom he presents himself.

54. What should the aspirant examine?

The aspirant has not to examine whether the ligious life offers more means to attain salva-on, nor whether he will have the graces neces-ry to fulfill its duties: he cannot doubt of it ithout offering an injury to Our Lord. But he ust form a correct idea of the religious life, of e self-renouncement which it requires, and he ust be able to bear testimony to himself that is disposed, with the assistance of God, to actise this self-renouncement. Finally, he must flect as to the congregation he proposes to enter; ıt, in this matter, he should above all have course to those to whom he presents himself r admission.

55. What should they do who have charge of examining a postulant?

They must examine : 1° the signs of the special vocation he may have, that is, the light and impulses of grace he has received, and which are the pledge of the divine call ; 2° the habitual disposition of the will and character of the postulant, in order to judge of the degree of fidelity which may be expected from him ; 3° his natural aptitude for the kind of life he wishes to embrace.

It is, moreover, necessary to require the letters and certificates usual in such cases, and to take detailed and certain information on these heads.

56. What must they avoid who examine a postulant?

They must not be too liberal or too lenient, through a certain natural desire of enlarging their religious family. There would, moreover, be grave inconveniences in admitting doubtful subjects, or such as would not manifest signs of a real vocation; the result might be a weakening of the religious spirit, scandals and even the loss of true vocations.

57. What are the causes of infidelity to one's vocation?

The causes are many; the most ordinary are a want of determination; false ideas conceived of the religious life, and which have not been rectified from the beginning ; certain inclinations, certain secret attachments, which we enter-

tain or which we do not combat with sufficient energy; negligence in spiritual exercises; weakening of the spirit of faith, and unnecessary delays in corresponding with the call of God.

Vocation is a most precious grace : we should generously and perseveringly combat all that might cause its loss.

58. What are the consequences of infidelity to one's vocation?

Infidelity to one's vocation is a misfortune which has very sad consequences in this life and in the next. It often happens, that, deprived by this infidelity of the abundant helps with which one would have persevered in a good life and obtained its crown, one does not persevere, and, consequently, deserves eternal reprobation.

St Liguori observes on this subject : " Worldlings do not scruple to say to young men who are called to the religious life, that they can serve God in any state, even in the midst of the world. Yes, we can, doubtless, serve God everywhere when we are not called to the religious life; but, if we are called thereto, and proving unfaithful to our vocation, we remain in the world, it will be difficult to lead a good life and serve God. "

59. Is it of obligation to follow a vocation to the religious state?

St Liguori answers thus : 1° The counsel in itself being a *counsel*, and not a *precept*, does not

oblige one under the penalty of mortal sin to embrace the religious state, since God invites, but does not command. 2° There is always some sin in knowingly choosing a state regardless of the divine will, because we thus imperil our salvation. 3° It would be a mortal sin, if, because of our weakness and the absence of the helps found in religion, we should think that we would be lost by remaining in the world, and yet, not wish to enter the religious state to which we believe ourselves called.

60. What does St Liguori add?

" According to the common opinion of the doctors, we cannot without mortal sin, in the case of one having a vocation, dissuade him from entering religion, or advise him to leave, even if we were to employ neither violence nor falsehood in doing so; because this would be to counsel him to do himself a great injury. I do not, therefore, see how to excuse him who causes a similar injury to himself. Nevertheless, continues the holy Doctor, who was as learned as he was humble, I do not wish to judge absolutely in this matter, I leave it to those who are more learned; but let us beseech Our Lord to preserve us altogether from such a danger. "

The same Saint says further : " With regard to those whom God calls to the religious life, I say, that they are *obliged* to follow their vocation, because God would refuse them in the world the particular graces which he had des-

ined for them in religion, graces without which they could, indeed, be saved, but with difficulty; for, says St Cyprian, the assistance of the Holy Ghost is communicated to us according to the order and designs of God, and not according to our caprice. "

CHAPTER II.

THE NOVITIATE.

61. Is it of much importance to employ the time of Novitiate well?

Yes, it is very important to employ properly the precious time of the Novitiate, because the future of his religious life depends upon the manner in which a novice will have employed it; it is during the Novitiate that the foundation of the edifice of perfection is laid.

62. What should a novice do above all?

A novice should, above all, endeavor to understand the religious life in general, its excellence, its advantages, religious perfection, the means of acquiring it, and the obstacles opposed to it.

63. With what sentiments should this knowledge inspire a novice for his vocation?

It should inspire him with the determination of corresponding to it with fidelity and courage, and to do nothing that would endanger it, or cause its loss.

64. What should a novice do who might have entered into religion with imperfect intentions?

The Saints counsel those who may have entered religion in this manner not to think of looking back, but, for a laudable end, to remain where they had entered with some human view, and thus make their vocation sure and divine. " Should there have been anything bad, says the B. de la Salle, retract it; if the intention was not sufficiently pure, form it without delay; and, as if you were but entering into your state, protest that you desire to remain solely because you believe that God wishes it. " (Collection.)

65. What are the duties of novices towards their Congregation?

A novice should esteem and love in a special manner the Congregation of which he desires to become a member. He should strive to understand thoroughly the object it has in view, and the means it employs to realize that object.

66. To what special study should he apply himself?

A novice should make a special study of the vows which are made in his Institute, in order to be well acquainted with their nature and obligations. He should also apply himself to a study of the Rules, in order to be able to observe them faithfully.

67. What are the duties of a novice with regard to the virtues which are the object of the vows of religion?

A novice should carefully apply himself to the practice of these virtues, so that they may become

habitual, and thus render him worthy of pronouncing his vows. He must therefore divest himself of all attachment to earthly goods, live a life of inviolable purity, and practise perfect obedience in all things.

68. What should a novice consider as the foundation of the religious virtues?

The Christian virtues; for, before observing the counsels, we must, evidently, observe the precepts; the practices of the religious life, how holy soever, must be subordinate to the commandments of God and of the Church. A novice will, therefore, carefully study the truths of religion and the duties of every Christian; he should know particularly what concerns the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, so that he may always prepare himself properly for them.

69. Is it important for a novice to apply himself to the reformation of his character?

Yes, because this will be for him an excellent and continual practice of virtue, as well as a means of being always in perfect union with his Brothers.

A novice must, therefore, constantly strive to correct his defects of character : he will be charitable and obliging, loyal and sincere, a stranger to curiosity, easily satisfied, an enemy to singularity and exaggeration, to flattery and detraction; he will practise kindness, meekness, patience, and all those virtues which, though

trifling in appearance, are not, on this account, less great before God, and which constitute the happines of religious communities.

70. What are the duties of novices towards their Rules and their Superiors?

By the very fact of his entering a Congregation, a novice gives himself to it in a certain manner, and he should be disposed to remain perfectly submissive to his Rule and his Superiors.

Saint Jane de Chantal said to her religious: " Be very humble, submissive and obedient, for these are the true virtues of novices. Obedience, which is the eldest daughter of humility, must be inviolably practised. Unless you are humble and obedient, you will be but phantoms of religious. "

71. To what should a novice particularly apply himself?

He should apply himself much to both mental and vocal prayer, without which perfection cannot be acquired. He will, therefore, strive to know in theory, and still more in practice, the various ways of prayer, and look upon the great science of mental prayer as one of the most precious fruits of his Novitiate.

72. Is not a novice exposed in a special manner to the illusions of the devil?

St Liguori says : " A novice, upon entering the house of the Lord, must hold himself in readiness, not for joys and consolations, but for

the combats which hell offers to those who give themselves to God. Satan will leave alone thousands of seculars, and, by preference, wage war with a novice, above all, if he sees him aspire to an Institute having for its object the salvation of souls. He will use every effort to make him abandon his vocation, and thus have the most certain guarantee of his eternal loss. He knows that a young novice, if he persevere in his fidelity to God, will snatch from him thousands of sinners, and become the instrument of their salvation. Hence, this enemy of souls will direct all his darts at him and employ all means to deceive him and cause his ruin."

73. How will a novice overcome these difficulties?

By prayer, vigilance and humility, but above all by perfect openness and simplicity of heart.

74. How should a novice conduct himself towards his Director?

A novice stands in need of an enlightened guide, whom he will find in his Director. He should address himself to him in the spirit of faith and with confidence, and be docile to his advice. Thus will he truly adapt himself to the spirit and virtues of his vocation.

75. Must not a novice be prepared for some trials?

A novice must expect three kinds of trials : 1° those which he will find in the practice of his Rules ; 2° those which will come to him through

his superiors ; 3° those which God will send him.

The observance of the Rules will impose upon him continual exercises of humility, self-renouncement and obedience. His superiors will try him to prove the purity of his intentions, and to be able to judge of the degree of his good will. God Himself will visit him, either with infirmities, or with aridity and desolation in prayer.

Whatever these trials may be, a novice will find them precious occasions of giving new vigor to his soul, preparing him for great sacrifices, and enabling him to testify by his courage how much he esteems his vocation.

76. Have novices any privileges?

Novices, in general, participate in all the privileges and favors enjoyed by the Congregation that has received them.

They participate in the special indulgences granted by the Sovereign Pontiffs to their Institute, as well as such as are granted to religious in general.

77. What effect does entrance into religion produce upon personal vows previously made?

Entrance into religion suspends vows previously made which are not compatible with the condition of a religious living in community. The reason is because religious life eminently includes the merits of all the good works whereby we may have bound ourselves to God.

But, if a novice, for any reason whatsoever,

return to the world, he is subject to the vows he had previously made, as their obligation was only suspended, and not annulled.

78. May a novice privately make the vows which are made in his Institute?

A novice may, privately, make one or more of the vows which are made in his Institute. But these vows, which are called *vows of devotion*, must not be made inconsiderately and without the approbation of the superiors and the spiritual director. They have, moreover, no other force than *private vows*, and do not bind the Congregation with regard to him who pronounces them.

It is prudent to stipulate, that, in case of being sent away, the obligation of these vows cease.

79. Is a novice always free to withdraw?

A novice may have legitimate motives to withdraw, but he should not do so without the advice of those who have grace to direct him. A novice who, through his own fault, would cause himself to be sent away, or who would leave without the advice of his superiors, would be guilty of ingratitude to God, from whom he received the precious grace of vocation, and he would endanger his salvation (60).

St Liguori says: "Let them who neglect their vocation to the religious state think seriously, and let them tremble at the sight of the danger to which they expose themselves."—"I repeat it,

there are many who are lost, because they lost their vocation."

But, if a novice return to the world by the advice of his superiors, after an honest trial of the religious life, he must not grieve or lament over it. By withdrawing, he performs an act of submission to the will of God, who will give him the necessary graces to bear the trials and sustain the conflicts of life, and save his soul.

CHAPTER III.

THE VOWS OF RELIGION.

Art. I. — *Vows in general.*

80. What is a vow?

A vow is a deliberate promise made to God of performing some better act, with the intention of obliging ourselves thereto under the penalty of sin.

81. What do you understand by saying that a vow is a *deliberate promise?*

A vow is a *deliberate promise,* that is, a promise made with exact knowledge of what is promised, with full consent and complete liberty.

82. Why do you say that a vow is a promise *made to God?*

A vow is a promise made to God alone, because it is an act of supreme worship which is due to God alone. It may he made with the intention of honoring the Most Blessed Virgin, or a Saint,

but it is only towards God that we oblige ourselves; to Him alone is a vow, properly so called, addressed.

83. What follows from the fact that a vow is made to God alone?

From the fact that a vow is a promise made to God alone, it follows, that the performance of the vow becomes an act of the *virtue of religion*, and the violation of a vow becomes a sin against the same virtue.

84. What is the *virtue of religion?*

It is a virtue by which man renders to God the worship and homage he owes Him.

This virtue holds the first rank among the other moral virtues, in as much as it draws us nearer to God. Its principal acts are : adoration, sacrifice, devotion, prayer, an oath, a vow, and the sanctification of Sundays and Holidays; but, besides these acts which are peculiar to it, it may also embrace either the acts of other virtues, or even the most indifferent acts by referring them to the worship and honor of God.

Religious are so called, precisely, because by their vows they practise in an excellent manner, by their state, the virtue of religion; and because they are, as it were, the virtue of religion personified and always in action.

85. Why do you say that a vow is a promise made to God to perform *some better act?*

Because the object of a vow being to honor God, it is not only necessary that the thing prom-

ised be morally good, but it must also be better than its contrary.

Thus, we could not make a vow of keeping our wealth, being free to renounce it, because this renunciation would be better.

86. What are the better acts which may be the object of a vow?

A vow may have as its object that which is already commanded, or an act which is only of counsel, or an act indifferent in itself, but which becomes good by the circumstances which accompany it, or by the end proposed.

87. What is the effect of a vow as to an act which is already commanded?

When the object of the vow is an act already commanded, it adds to the obligation already existing another obligation, which is that of the vow itself; hence, the violation of the commandment includes a double malice and two different sins, as well as its performance contains two sorts of merit and moral goodness. Thus, if he, who having made a vow to observe abstinence on Fridays, violates this obligation, he adds to the sin against the precept another sin against the virtue of religion; on the other hand, if he is faithful to his vow, he adds the merit of the virtue of religion to that of the observance of the precept.

88. What is the effect of a vow with regard to an act vhich is only a matter of counsel?

The vow adds a new excellence to that which is in itself but an act of perfection.

Thus, to renounce our wealth when we are free to do so, is an act of counsel already good in itself, but to oblige ourselves thereto by vow, is still more perfect.

89. What effect is produced by a vow with regard to an act which is indifferent in itself?

A vow adds a special goodness, namely that of the virtue of religion, to an act indifferent in itself, but yet good because of the circumstances that accompany it, or by the end proposed.

In itself, it may be indifferent to take a walk or a ride for pleasure; suppose we determine to go afoot in a spirit of penance and engage ourselves thereto by a vow; the thing being already good because of the virtuous intention connected with it, it becomes by the vow an act of the virtue of religion.

90. Why do you say a vow is a promise made *with the intention of obliging ourselves thereto under the penalty of sin?*

Because a vow is not a simple resolution, but an engagement made, an obligation which we have imposed upon ourselves under the penalty of sin.

This sin is invested with the malice of sacrilege.

91. To what extent does a vow in general oblige us?

A vow being an obligation which we voluntarily impose upon ourselves, it obliges us only so far as we have willed to oblige ourselves; and

this holds good as to the matter which is the object of the vow, the time, the place and the other circumstances, and even the nature of the obligation we have imposed upon ourselves, which may oblige, according as we may have willed, under the penalty of mortal sin or only under that of venial sin.

It must, however, be observed: 1° that we cannot oblige ourselves under the penalty of mortal sin when the matter is inconsiderable; 2° that we are not free to limit, at our pleasure, the vows of religion (143).

92. In general, what must we do before making a vow?

It is always a serious matter to impose upon ourselves an obligation under the penalty of sin; we should, therefore, never make a vow without *reflection* and without *counsel*. A vow pronounced without consideration and without the approbation of our spiritual director can hardly be for the honor of God, and it often becomes for the soul a source of anxiety and scruples.

93. May we legitimately be dispensed from a vow?

We cannot be legitimately dispensed from a vow except by competent authority. There must, moreover, be just motives; here there is question of a sacred engagement, of a contract made with God Himself; man cannot break it at pleasure.

Art. II. — *The vows of religion.*

94. Are there different kinds of vows?

There are different kinds of vows: there are absolute and conditional vows; personal and real vows; private vows and vows of religion.

95. What do you mean by *absolute* and *conditional* vows?

Absolute vows are those which depend on no condition; *conditional* vows are those which we make with certain conditions.

To vow purely and simply to give a certain sum of money to the poor, is an absolute vow. To do the same thing provided we recover our health, is a conditional vow.

96. What do you mean by *personal* and *real* vows?

Personal vows are those by which we bind our person or our own actions; *real* vows are those of which the matter is extraneous to ourselves.

It is a personal vow to promise to say such a prayer; it is a real vow to engage ourselves to bestow an alms: this latter may be accomplished by a third person.

97. What do you mean by *private* vows, and by *public* vows or those of *religion?*

Private vows are those which are made immediately to God and without the medium of a religious body charged to receive them.

Public vows or vows of *religion* are those which are made in a religious body according to its Rules, and accepted by the Superiors in the name of the Order or of the Church.

98. What is the matter of private vows and of vows of religion?

Private vows may have as their object such or such particular actions, or any particular virtues, which, most frequently, will be those which form the object of the vows of religion.

The evangelical counsels, poverty, chastity, and obedience, are the matter of the vows of religion. Of all vows these are the most excellent and meritorious.

99. Why are the three vows of religion the most excellent?

For three principal reasons : 1° Because they destroy in ourselves the obstacles that oppose the love of God; 2° Because they free the soul from the solicitudes which are encountered by people in the world; 3° Because they are a holocaust which we make of ourselves to God.

100. How do the three vows destroy the obstacles to the love of God?

Three great obstacles oppose the reign of charity in our hearts. The first obstacle, which is the desire of temporal goods, is destroyed by the vow of poverty; the second, which is the concupiscence of sensual pleasures, is destroyed by the vow of chastity; the third, which is the perver-

sion of our will, is destroyed by the vow of obedience.

101. How do the three vows deliver us from the care of earthly goods?

The three vows deliver religious from the three great solicitudes which, in the world, ordinarily distract us from the service of God : namely, the care of the administration of riches, that of the government of a family, and finally, that of the disposal of one's own actions.

102. How are the three vows a perfect holocaust of all that we can possess?

By the vow of poverty we sacrifice the exterior goods of fortune; by the vow of chastity, the personal goods of the body; by the vow of obedience, the intimate goods of the soul.

103. What do the holy Doctors say of the excellence of religious vows?

The holy Doctors call the religious profession a second Baptism, and theologians assure us, that we thereby obtain the entire remission of our sins, so that, were we then to die, we would not undergo the pains of purgatory; it being understood that the disposition of the heart correspond with the excellence of the verbal donation which we make of ourselves to God.

104. To what do the Saints compare the religious profession?

They compare it to martyrdom. St Jerome says: "It is not only the shedding of one's blood which

is counted as martyrdom; we must acknowledge, that the perfect sacrifice of a soul devoting its life to the Lord is also a daily martyrdom. The first weaves its crown of roses and violets; the second, of lilies."

105. What else is said of the religious profession?

It has justly been observed, that, in the same way as the nuptial contract produces the state of marriage, so also, by the religious profession, the soul contracts an intimate union with Jesus Christ, and becomes in a special manner His spouse.

106. When making profession in an Institute having simple vows, can a religious commute previous vows of himself (77)?

Such a religious, when he makes his perpetual profession, may, if he have the intention and will, commute of himself into vows of religion, the previous vows which are incompatible or even compatible with the Rules, because private vows are evidently less perfect than religious profession.

In this case, even if he should not persevere in the Congregation, the previous vows would no longer be of obligation, and he would sin only against the vows of religion which he had substituted for them.

107. Besides the three ordinary vows, are not some particular vows added in certain Institutes?

In certain Congregations, some particular vows

are added to the ordinary vows, according to the ends of the Congregation.

Thus, in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools there are, besides the three vows, those of stability and of teaching the poor gratuitously.

Art. III. — *The different kinds of religious vows.*

108. How are the vows of religion divided?

They are divided into *solemn* and *simple* vows. Simple vows are also divided into *temporary* and *perpetual* vows.

109. What are solemn vows?

They are perpetual vows recognized by the Sovereign Pontiff as *solemn*. These vows are made only in religious Orders properly so called.

They are called *solemn*, not because of the ceremonies that may accompany them, but because they are declared to be such by the Church.

110. What are simple vows?

Simple vows are those which are pronounced in a Congregation approved by the Church, but which she does not declare to be solemn.

These vows are called *simple*, because they contain nothing more than what is required by the nature of the vows.

111. Do solemn vows differ essentially from simple vows?

No, the matter is absolutely the same; they differ only accidentally, that is, in their effects.

112. Explain this difference.

The solemn vow of poverty radically removes the faculty of possessing or acquiring temporal goods; whereas the simple vow allows the right of possession, and only forbids the free use of this right.

The solemn vow of chastity renders subsequent marriage null and void; the simple vow makes it illicit and criminal, but does not destroy its validity.

The solemn vow of obedience prevents the religious from validly contracting any engagement towards God, or man, without the permission of his superior; the simple vow does not prevent us from contracting such validly, though an engagement taken without permission be illicit, and the superior has the right to annul it.

113. What difference is there, in the matter of dispensation, between solemn and simple vows?

Solemn vows are made in an *absolute* manner, and accepted by the Church in the same manner, so that they are not susceptible of an ordinary dispensation; in general, the Sovereign Pontiff, when there are exceptional motives, only causes certain effects to be suspended, but leaves the substance of the vows; this is what is commonly called *secularization*.

Simple vows, on the contrary, are susceptible of dispensation; there must, doubtless, be serious motives, but the dispensation being granted, the engagement ceases.

114. What are temporary vows?

Temporary vows are those which a religious, after having finished his probation, pronounces for a time limited and determined by the Rules of his Congregation.

115. What are perpetual vows?

Perpetual vows are those by which a religious engages himself for life.

116. What is the effect of renovation of vows?

There are two kinds of renovation: renovation of *piety*, which is a private and excellent act of the love of God, and the *official* renovation, which is a new engagement.

When we officially renew our temporary vows, this renovation, being made with the consent of Superiors and received by them, prolongs the duration of vows as determined by the Rules.

After having pronounced perpetual vows, their renovation can be nothing more than a pious practice, having for its object the recalling of the engagements contracted, and confirming a religious more and more in an inviolable fidelity thereto. This practice is also agreeable to God and advantageous to the soul.

117. What do some theologians teach concerning the renovation of profession, with the requisite dispositions?

Some theologians, and among them St Liguori, are of opinion that the remission of all the penalty due to sin, which is obtained by profession (103), is extended to the act by which a religious renews his perpetual vows, either in public, or in private, as often as he pleases.

118. Why is it that, in some Congregations, perpetual vows are made to be preceded by temporary vows?

It is a very wise measure taken in the interest of him that makes the vows, as well as of the Congregation in which he makes them. A religious thus has the opportunity of trying his strength a longer time, and the Congregation exposes itself less to keep in its ranks any one who might be a cause of trouble or irregularity.

This measure also renders petitions for dispensation more rare, a thing which it is always a matter of regret to be obliged to have recourse to.

119. Would it not be more perfect to enter an Order professing solemn vows than a Congregation having only simple vows?

In themselves, solemn vows are of greater value. But, if it be true in theory, that there are some vocations higher than others, and Congregations which propose to their members a higher perfection, it is not less certain that what is *practically best* for everyone depends upon two things: *vocation* from God and His grace on the one hand, and, on the other, perfect *correspondence* to this vocation and to this grace. The best,

in a word, is in the will of God, executed in every detail, and this alone is the best for every one.

120. What is to be thought of those who, under the pretext of perfection, or of performing some greater good, wish to leave the Congregation to which they have engaged themselves, and enter a more austere Order?

That they are nearly always the victims of inconstancy, or of a great illusion. This is a snare which the devil has but too often employed to cause the loss of vocations, and cast these victims back into the world. " Let every man," says the Apostle, " abide in the same calling in which he was called. » (I. Cor., VII., 20.)

This reply is still more justly applicable to religious, who, not being able to aspire to the priesthood in their Institute, wish to leave it in order to embrace the ecclesiastical state.

121. What sentiments should a religious entertain for his own vocation?

A religious should nourish in his heart a great esteem and love for his vocation, with sincere gratitude to God for having called him thereto. He will doubtless honor all Congregations approved of by the Church; but he will love his own most, as a well-bred child loves its mother more than anyone else, though she might not be so rich or beautiful.

122. Should those who are not yet allowed to make but temporary vows feel uneasy because they are not permitted to bind themselves by perpetual vows?

To feel a holy desire to bind ourselves for ever

by vows is assuredly praiseworthy and agreeable to God, provided the delay imposed by the Rule does not lead to sadness or gloom. Every one, in his vocation, should be happy to do the will of God, manifested by the Constitutions and the will of Superiors.

123. Should a vocation be considered as unsettled from the fact that one's vows are only temporary?

Far from it; when the novitiate is over, one's vocation should be considered as decided. To call it into question is dangerous, and often the beginning of infidelity.

Moreover, besides the duty of a religious to correspond to the grace of his vocation (60), the very special services which the Congregation has sometimes rendered him, and the gratitude he owes to it, do not exempt him from some obligation of stability.

124. What should a religious having temporary vows do, when he is not authorized to renew them?

He should submit, humble himself, and, above all, take a generous resolution to deserve, by perfect regularity, to be admitted to vows again.

125. May a religious, in private, make vows other than those of religion?

He may; but he should not do so without the approbation of his Superiors (112) and his spiritual director. It must, moreover, be observed that, in general, every vow that would be pre-

judicial to religious observances is null and void, not being the promise of a better act (85).

126. Can the superior of a community, though not a priest, annul the private vows of his inferiors in an Institute having simple vows?

A superior, though not a priest, may, in virtue of the power of domination inherent in his office, *annul* vows, even when compatible with community life, which religious may make *after* their perpetual profession of the three vows of religion; provided, however, the Institute be approved by the Church.

However, a lower superior cannot annul a vow which may have been made with the approbation of the higher superiors.

127. Are not certain conditions required in order to make the vows of religion *validly?*

Besides the general conditions which depend upon the nature of the vows of religion, or on the laws of the Church, there are often special conditions in the various Institutes to which one must conform to pronounce vows validly.

128. What are the conditions, as to age, for making vows in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools?

In the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, it *is* necessary to be eighteen years of age, in order to be admitted to annual vows; these vows are renewed from year to year, until the age of twenty-three, when triennial vows may be made; these are equally renewed every year,

until the age of twenty-eight, when one may be admitted to perpetual vows [1].

The Rules lay down what concerns the examination of the aspirant, and the manner of admitting him to vows. (Chap. XVII.)

ART. IV. — *The virtues which form the object of the vows of religion.*

129. Is there any difference between the vows of religion and the virtues which form the object of these vows?

Several differences may be mentioned between the virtue and the vow: 1° The vow is, as it were, a *means* of attaining the virtue, which may be regarded as the *end;* 2° The vow does not tend beyond what it imposes under the penalty of sin; the virtue extends also to what is of perfection; 3° Every transgression of the virtue is not a violation of the vow (except the vow of chastity, 306); whereas, in general, the violation of the vow is, at the same time, a transgression of the virtue.

[1] *Rescript of May 6th.*, 1859. — This rescript modifies the eighth section of the Bull of Approbation, which is conceived in these terms: " That the Brothers be admitted to the said Institute in the sixteenth or seventeenth year of their age; that they first bind themselves thereto by vows for three years only, and that they renew these vows annually, until they will have reached and completed the twenty-fifth year of their age, at which age they will be admitted to pronounce perpetual vows."

130. In what sense is the vow, as it were the *means*, and the virtue the *end?*

In this sense, that the vow is made with the view of acquiring the virtue more surely, more easily, and in a higher degree.

Thus, by the vow of poverty, a religious deprives himself of the free use of temporal goods, but with the view of succeeding more perfectly in the destruction of inordinate affection for them, which is the object of the virtue.

On the other hand, if the vow be conducive to the acquisition of the virtue, the latter assures the perfect observance of the vow, and, in this sense, it may be said that it is itself a means with regard to the vow.

131. What practical conclusion may be drawn from the above?

That a religious who would neglect the virtue after having made vow, would be very inconsistent with himself, thus remaining more imperfect than many Christians in the midst of the world. Besides, as an inevitable consequence, notable neglect of virtue would infallibly lead to infidelity to the vows.

132. Does the virtue extend beyond the vows?

The virtue extends not only to what is of obligation, but also to what is of counsel and perfection.

Thus, with regard to obedience, a good religious submits, not only to the commands made

him in the name of his vow, but also to the simple desires of his superior.

133. What should a religious therefore do with regard to the virtues which are the object of the vows?

Since, by his state, a religious tends to perfection, he should strive, day by day, to grow in virtue, so that he may be able to say with the Apostle : "*Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect... But one thing I do : forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I pursue towards the mark.*" (Philip., III., 12-14.)

134. Can we sin against the virtue without violating the vow?

We can sin against the virtue without violating the vow. Thus, he who would be so far attached to temporal possessions as to make it avarice, might not violate the vow even though sinning against the virtue of poverty.

But, in general, a vow cannot be violated without, at the same time, transgressing the virtue which is its object.

135. Does not the oblation which a religious makes to his Institute of his person involve in itself some particular duties?

By his vows, a religious makes an oblation of his person to his Institute; having become a member of the family which has received him among its own, he contracts certain duties towards this same family. Among these duties,

the first is, doubtless, submission to the Superiors and the Rules (147); but it is also necessary to mention, in a special manner, fraternal union and evangelical detachment from parents and relatives.

136. Why and how should religious practise fraternal charity?

Religious who compose a Congregation are all members of the same body, whose perfect life results from their union and their reciprocal services. Hence arises the duty of fraternal charity for each. From this holy charity flow disinterestedness, esteem and mutual confidence, the bearing with one another's defects, prompt and complete forgetfulness of wrongs received, delicacy in obliging, and interior respect which is manifested externally by deference full of simplicity and cordiality.

137. Why should a religious practise evangelical detachment from parents and relatives?

By his vows, a religious has given himself to God and His service in the Congregation which he has entered. As St Ignatius observes: " He should lay aside all carnal affection towards his relatives, in order to change it into spiritual affection, and no longer love them but with the love required by well-regulated charity; like a man who, being dead to the world and self-love, no longer lives but for Jesus Christ, who holds in his regard the place of father, mother, brothers, sisters, and of all things. "

138. What does evangelical detachment from parents demand of religious?

Evangelical detachment requires that, whilst preserving in their hearts a true love for their parents, they lay aside that too sensitive affection which would but diminish it; that they avoid engaging themselves in the temporal affairs of their relatives, and that they do not concern themselves about them in an exaggerated manner, which is often to the detriment of their duties; that they banish the immoderate desire of visiting them, of undertaking those journeys so often detrimental to the religious life, and to which the masters of the spiritual life, in general, are so much opposed.

139. What may be said to those who pretend that the religious life suppresses love for one's parents and relatives?

They may be told that the religious profession, far from suppressing love for one's parents and relatives, gives them that place in the heart which is required by well-regulated charity, that is, the first after God and what is required in His service; that this love in a religious is, in reality, more solid, more generous, than that which is often met with in the world; that it is above all more advantageous for parents, because it is above all interested in their real good, which is their salvation.

Art. V. — *Obligation of observing vows.*

140. What is the obligation of the vows of religion?

In general, the vows of religion oblige under penalty of mortal sin; still, there may be but venial sin in consequence of the lightness of the matter, and the absence of full consent.

A sin committed against a vow has the malice of sacrilege.

141. Are the vows of religion of the same extent in all Institutes?

The vows of religion are made in accordance with the special Rules of every Institute (17); their extent, therefore, varies according to the religious body in which they are pronounced.

It is from this more or less perfect manner in which the Rule intends the vows to be practised, that different degrees of religious perfection among Institutes arise.

142. What follows from the above?

1° That superiors must be careful that novices be well instructed upon their particular obligations as to vows; 2° That they assure themselves that all their religious always preserve an exact understanding of the sense that the Rule attaches to the vows. This duty is imposed upon them in a special manner with regard to religious devoted to temporal employments, and who, more than

others, are exposed to have insufficient knowledge, and particularly with regard to the vow of poverty.

143. Is he, who pronounces the vows of religion, free to restrict them or to extend them at pleasure?

The aspirant to the vows of religion is free to make these vows, or not to make them; but he is not free to restrict or extend their obligations, either as to time, the matter of the vows, or the nature of the engagement he makes.

The vows are contracts with regard to which the Church has full authority. She may lay down conditions for the making of these vows, and these conditions are obligatory. Thus, for the vows of religion, she determines that they cannot be made except in accordance with the Rules of the Institute into which one has been admitted. It is, therefore, not permitted to make perpetual vows, when the Rules allow them only for a time; nor to make them for a time, when the Rules prescribe perpetual vows. In the same manner, we cannot otherwise vow poverty, chastity, or obedience, than in the manner prescribed by the Rule we have embraced.

144. What of him who, in publicly pronouncing his vows, would mentally restrict their extent, or would have the formal intention of not binding himself at all?

The wretch who would thus act would be guilty of mortal sins of falsehood, of irreligion, and of injustice to his Congregation. He would be bound to repair this mental restriction by pronouncing his

vows anew, and it will suffice to do it interiorly. As long as he persists in his feigned profession, he confirms and perpetuates his fraud and injustice towards his Institute, and cannot approach the sacraments.

Moreover, though his formal intention of not binding himself have the effect of his not having vows before the tribunal of conscience, he is not the less bound before the ecclesiastical court in as absolute a manner, as if the vows had been made with the ordinary conditions. His superiors, though they may be informed of his pretended profession, always have the right to hold him externally to the Rules; and, if he desired to leave his Institute, he would be obliged to ask for dispensation from the proper authority, as if he had truly made vows.

145. How should a religious esteem his vows?

He should consider them as a priceless treasure, and should observe them with a fidelity that will stand proof under all trials, remembering that their merit, before God and man, consists less in making the vows than in their inviolable observance. To neglect their observance would be the matter of a rigorous judgment. The Wise Man says : "*If thou hast vowed anything to God, defer not to pay it : for an unfaithful and foolish promise displeaseth Him... And it is much better not to vow, than after a vow not to perform the things promised.* (Eccl., v., 3, 4.)

Art. VI. — *The obligation of observing the Rules.*

146. What obligation does the making of vows impose upon religious besides that of the vows themselves?

That of obeying the Superiors and the Rules of his Congregation.

147. Why?

Because the making of vows includes a donation which a religious makes of himself to his Institute, and by which he transfers to it the rights he had, as an individual, over his own acts; he thus engages himself to obey his Superiors and his Rules.

148. What is the object of Rules?

The object of Rules is : 1° to fix the extent of vows and to guard their integrity ; 2° to determine, according to the special end of the Institute, the exercise of charity and of the other virtues.

149. Do the Rules oblige under the penalty of sin?

The Rules do not ordinarily oblige under the penalty of sin, except those which, determining the matter of the vows, derive their obligation from the vows themselves.

However, the Rules are not simply counsels, but real laws; hence, superiors have the right

of imposing penalties on those who transgress them, to which penalty the latter must submit.

150. Is there not, ordinarily, some offence against God in the transgression of a point of the Rules?

It is difficult to violate a point of the Rules without, at least, a venial fault, because of the motive of the violation, which almost always arises from some inordinate passion, such as negligence, lukewarmness, sensuality, impatience, self-love, etc.

It is also a fault, whenever the violation is a cause of bad example, or when any other evil results therefrom.

151. In what case is a mortal sin committed in the transgression of the Rules?

When the Rules are violated through *formal contempt*.

152. Is there mortal sin in the *habitual* transgression of the Rules?

The *habitual* transgression of the Rules does not, in itself, exceed the limits of venial sin; but it easily leads to *formal contempt*, and thus to the state of mortal sin.

153. What other consequences may follow the habitual transgression of the Rules?

A religious who habitually transgresses his Rules: 1° will find it very difficult and almost impossible to observe the vows; 2° he may do a very serious injury to his Institute; 3° he com-

promises his vocation, and, perhaps, even his salvation.

These too ordinary consequences of the habitual transgression of Rules show how great is the peril of such transgressions.

154. What should be done by an inferior who is the witness of a grave transgression of some point of the Rules?

He should, with simplicity, inform the local superior, if the latter be not already aware of the transgression; he will also inform the Brother Visitor during the time of the regular visit. In certain cases, and for faults of exceptional gravity, he would be obliged to inform the Superior General.

In so doing, he should avoid that narrowness of mind, which would see a cause for information in everything, not less than a culpable indifference for what concerns the good of our Brothers and our Congregation.

155. Does the duty of giving information also exist when we have promised secrecy?

Yes, if our silence be prejudicial to our community or to a third person.

156. Is it lawful to follow a custom which interprets or even modifies some point of the Rules?

Yes, if the custom be legitimate; it then has the force of a real law, as much for permitting as for forbidding.

157. Under what conditions does a custom become legitimate?

It must: 1° be reasonable; 2° general, that is,

practised by the greatest number; 3° sufficiently established by prescription of time without having been called into question by legitimate authority.

158. Is a custom legitimate if authorized only by a particular superior?

Such a custom is ordinarily an abuse, and does not excuse those who follow it.

159. May the silence of Superiors General be construed into the abrogation of important Rules?

No, there must be, at least, the tacit approbation of the Holy See, if the Rules have been approved by it.

160. Can there be any such thing as prescription against the essential obligations of the vows?

No, there is never any prescription as to obligations of this nature.

161. In practice, how do we distinguish a legitimate custom from an abuse?

We may regard as legitimate customs those which good religious generally follow, and as abusive customs, those which are observed only by tepid and relaxed religious.

162. What is the obligation of Superiors with regard to the observance of the Rules?

Superiors are obliged, in virtue of their office, to watch, in their Institute, or in their community, over the maintenance of religious discipline

by the observance of the Rules ; their negligence on this respect may easily become a considerable fault.

163. What does the Blessed de la Salle say with regard to the importance of fidelity to the Rules ?

" Be very regular in all the observances of the community, with the view that such is the will of God, and that it is the most suitable means of doing what St Peter says, *to make sure our vocation and election* (II. St Peter, I., 10), as far as we can do so in this world. "

" Animated by simple views of faith, observe perfect regularity with regard to the smallest practices, though in themselves they appear of little consequence, because you recognize the will of God in them, and because it is as important for you to perform His holy will in the smallest practices, as well as in the greatest. "

ART. VII. — *The obligation of tending to perfection.*

164. Is a religious obliged to tend to perfection?

Yes, since by his vocation he is called to a higher sanctity than ordinary Christians, and because, by his vows, he has embraced a state of perfection.

165. Is a religious bound to be perfect?

A religious is not bound to be perfect, but he should strive to become so. His vocation is not the state of *perfection acquired*, but the state of *tending towards perfection.*

166. What are the means of perfection for a religious?

The vows are the principal means; the Rules are secondary means, but they are most efficacious and excellent.

167. Is the obligation of tending to perfection distinct from that of observing the vows and the Rules?

These two obligations are embraced within each other, as the obligation of observing the commandments of God is contained in that of obeying Him. Thus, in practice, a religious who observes His vows and His Rules, at least in all that is prescribed in important matters, really tends to perfection.

168. Is there any case in which a religious would commit a *special* mortal sin against the obligation of tending to perfection?

These cases are extremely rare, because we ordinarily employ the means which are, strictly speaking, necessary to fulfil the obligation of tending to perfection.

We must consider as mortally offending against this obligation : 1° a religious who would be *formally* in the disposition not to tend to perfection in any manner; 2° him who would *firmly* resolve to make no effort to attain it;

3° him who would *contemn* the means of reaching it; we must consider him as implicitly despising the essential means of leading to perfection who would habitually violate his vows.

169. Does the obligation of tending to perfection render the sins of a religious more grievous than those of a simple Christian?

The commandments of God and of the Church do not oblige a religious more than a simple Christian. In either, a sin of slander, of falsehood, etc., does not, *in itself,* change its nature, Still, the sin of a religious may often become more considerable, by reason of his more perfect knowledge, by the scandal given, or by other particular circumstances.

170. May a religious, under the pretext of zeal, or in view of serving his neighbor, neglect his own perfection?

We do not cease to labor for our perfection when we accomplish the works of zeal which are conformable to our vocation, and in the limits prescribed by our Rules and obedience. But it would be an illusion and a great abuse to spend ourselves entirely in the service of our neighbor, and to neglect our own perfection. This zeal would no longer be according to God, and it would not produce the fruits of salvation, because God would not bless it.

CHAPTER IV.

POVERTY.

Art. I. — *The simple vow of poverty. Matter of this vow.*

171. What is the simple vow of poverty?

The simple vow of poverty is a promise made to God of debarring ourselves, conformably to approved Rules, from the free and independent power of disposing of any temporal goods, or of any object whatsoever that may have monetary value.

172. Has the simple vow of poverty always the same extent?

The simple vow of poverty imposes obligations which are more or less rigorous, according to the diversity of Congregations. Whatever these differences be, the following may be observed: 1° That the most perfect poverty is not always the most strict, but that which is in the greatest harmony with the end of the Congregation; 2° That the poverty which subjects a religious to

a more complete dependance becomes, by obedience, really more meritorious than a more austere poverty in which there would be less dependence.

173. Does the simple vow of poverty ordinarily allow the power of possession to remain ?

In general, the simple vow of poverty allows the power of possessing and acquiring to remain, and deprives one only of that of disposing freely of one's temporal goods.

In a word, the simple vow of poverty leaves the right, but forbids the *act* of proprietorship.

174. What is the *right* of proprietorship ?

The *right* of proprietorship is the faculty of possessing as one's own, or of acquiring any temporal goods whatsoever.

175. What is the *act* of proprietorship ?

The *act* of proprietorship is the free and independent disposal of temporal goods.

176. What ordinarily constitutes the matter of the vow of poverty ?

1° All those goods which do not belong to a religious as his own, and especially those of his community ; 2° All the gifts which may be offered to him as tokens of affection and gratitude, or as alms ; 3° The product of his labor in as much as it may have monetary value ; 4° Every *act* of proprietorship with regard to his personal possessions.

177. May a religious having simple vows retain the ownership of his patrimonial possessions?

As the simple vow removes the acts but not the right of ownership, a religious who has pronounced it may have the *bare ownership* or the *radical domain* of his family possessions, and he may even acquire other possessions by right of succession or donation. But, in general, he cannot preserve their administration, use, or usufruct.

178. What do you understand by the bare ownership or the radical domain which a religious having simple vows may hold?

We understand the simple ownership by such a religious of some temporal possessions, without being able to dispose of them lawfully without permission.

179. What do you understand by the administration, use, or usufruct?

Administration is the right to control and manage one's possessions; *usufruct* is the right to the use and enjoyment of possessions of which another is the bare owner, like the proprietor himself, but with the obligation of preserving the substance of the possessions; the *use* is the pure and simple enjoyment of a thing, and this is applicable above all to moveables.

Art. II. — *Permissions.*

180. What is it that prevents the existence of the *act* of proprietorship?

It is permission.

181. How does permission exclude the act of proprietorship?

Because in subordinating the will of the inferior to that of the superior, it happens, that the inferior no longer acts as the master and proprietor of a thing; his action may and should be attributed to the superior, since it depends upon and flows from him.

182. How are permissions distinguished?

As to the *substance*, a permission is *valid* or *invalid*, *lawful* or *unlawful;* and as to *form*, it is *express*, *tacit* or *presumed*.

183. What is a *valid* permission?

A *valid* permission is that which the superior has the power of granting.

184. When is a permission *invalid* or *null* and *void?*

A permission is *invalid* or *nul* and *void*, when the superior has not the power of granting it.

Such would be the permission granted by a subordinate superior to undertake certain journeys, when the higher superiors had reserved to themselves alone the authorization for them.

185. Does an invalid permission excuse from sin?

A superior, who knowingly gives a permission beyond his rights, himself sins against his vow. The inferior who uses this permission, equally sins if he is aware of its nullity; a null permission being a permission that cannot be.

186. What is to be said of a permission obtained by fraud, or by false representations?

A permission obtained by mere fraud, or false representations, is null and void, since the superior would not have given it if he had been honestly informed; it cannot, therefore, excuse the inferior from sinning against his vow (365, 366).

187. What is a *lawful* permission?

A *lawful* permission is that which is granted for just motives.

188. What is an *unlawful* permission?

An *unlawful* permission is that which is granted without sufficient motives.

Thus, in a general manner, superiors cannot permit unnecessary expenses, or the use of superfluities.

189. Does unlawful permission excuse from sin?

Unlawful permission may excuse him who gives, and him who uses it, from sinning against the *vow;* but neither one nor the other is free from some fault against the *virtue* of poverty (287). This fault is, ordinarily, only venial.

190. What is an *express* permission?

Permission is *express* or *formal* when the superior, by a formal act, permits a certain action to be done.

191. What is to be observed of *express* permissions?

An *express* permission is of all the most sure, it being understood that it be, at the same time, *valid* and *lawful*.

192. What is a *tacit* permission?

A *tacit*, *virtual* or *implied* permission is that which is contained in an express permission, or in some formal act, which, by its nature, or by custom, is looked upon as including it.

Thus, the permission of going on a journey implies that of spending money, giving and receiving what, in such cases, the good religious of the Institute spend, give, and receive.

193. Is the silence of a superior who, being present, does not oppose the action of an inferior, always a tacit permission?

This silence is sometimes a mark of the consent of superiors; but frequently, also, prudence, or even weakness makes them close their eyes and tolerate abuses which they interiorly condemn.

194. Is a legitimate custom equivalent to a tacit permission?

A legitimate custom may be called a tacit permission (157), in virtue of which custom such and such acts are regarded as lawful.

195. Does tacit permission suffice to excuse one from sinning against the vow?

Yes, provided we have reason to believe that it actually exists. In this case, an inferior really acts with dependence upon his superior, and does not dispose of anything as being its proprietor.

196. What is a *presumed* permission?

A *presumed* permission is one which is supposed to be existing in the will of the superior, because we have well founded reasons for believing that it would be granted if asked for.

Thus, if a superior has always and without difficulty granted such a permission to one of his religious, the latter may, in a given case, presume that the same permission being asked, it would not be refused.

197. May a presumed permission be sufficient?

A permission presumed in good faith may, strictly speaking, suffice to exempt one from sinning against the vow, at least when it is difficult to have recourse to the superior. This permission should be used also in occasions when one is persuaded that the superior would thus have it, for instance, not to lose a favorable opportunity that presents itself.

In a general way, it may be observed, that if the presumed permission suffice to prevent the violation of the vow, it does not always suffice to excuse from sinning against the virtue.

198. Are presumed permissions without danger?

Presumed permission are often to be suspected. We are liable to deceive ourselves by self-love or by some other inordinate affection which makes us look upon certain conjectures as strong when, in reality, are ill-founded.

Presumed permission would manifestly be without value, if the superior had declared that he would not have a thing done unless a permission were asked.

199. Should a religious, who has presumed a permission, inform his superior as soon as possible?

A religious who presumes a permission always supposes the will of his superior; it is, therefore, at least becoming that he inform him as soon as possible.

200. In what case especially should we advise our superior as soon as possible?

When there is question of things of importance. The will of the superior cannot, in such a case particulary, be reasonably presumed, but for the time when it has been impossible to obtain a formal permission; we must therefore advise him with the shortest possible delay.

201. What should we do when we have received anything under a presumed permission?

He who has accepted anything under a presumed permission is not thereby authorized to keep the thing he has accepted, but he should obtain a formal permission as soon as possible.

202. May a religious *habitually* presume upon the permission of his superior?

What may be done, in a particular case, may not be done *habitually*, even supposing the circumstances to be identical. To presume upon a permission habitually, under the pretext that the superior would grant it in such a case, would be equivalent to dispensing ourselves nearly always from asking permission : this is certainly against the will of superiors, and would prove disastrous to religious discipline.

203. What practical conclusion is to be drawn from what has been said of the dangers of presumed permission?

1° That we must be careful not to presume too easily upon a permission, above all, when it may be asked for; 2° That presumed permission is not well founded when it is too frequently repeated ; 3° That, in order to prevent troubles of conscience as well as to increase our merits, it is much better to have recourse te our superior whenever it is possible; 4° That in all cases in which we act upon a presumed permission, we should advise the superior as soon as possible.

ART. III. — *Different ways of violating the vow of poverty.*

204. In general, when is the vow of poverty violated?

A religious sins against the vow of poverty whenever he performs an act of proprietorship

without permission ; this may take place : 1° by *appropriating* an object ; 2° by *disposing* of it.

205. What do you mean by appropriating an object?

To appropriate an object is to take, retain, receive, borrow, or buy it.

206. What sins does a religious commit who has the misfortune of *taking* for himself or for another, what belongs to persons outside of the community?

He violates the vow of poverty, and, at the same time, sins against the seventh commandment.

207. What sin does he commit, if the object belong to the community?

A religious who, without permission, takes for himself or for another anything belonging to the community, commits : 1° a sin against the vow, that is, a sacrilege ; 2° a sin against justice, by the violation of the seventh commandment ; 3° another sin against the virtue of religion, that is, a second sacrilege, his theft being from a religious house.

208. May a religious take an object when it is to be only for his own use?

No, because he would perform an act of proprietorship, since the use of a thing is of monetary value. Besides, when anything is given him legitimately, he should not use it as its owner or master.

209. May a religious take eatables or other necessary things without permission?

Necessity gives a religious the right of asking, but not stealing.

210. May a religious appropriate the fruit of his labor or of his earnings?

Whatever a religious earns by his labor, or by his savings, belongs by right to the community. Thus, if a religious renders a service and receives therefor some compensation or a present, such compensation or present belongs to the community. In the same way, if a religious save something in his travels, he cannot use these savings in making presents to his friends or in a supplemental journey; they belong to the community and must be returned to it.

211. If a religious receive a present or some compensation for his labor, has he a right to complain because he is not allowed the enjoyment of it?

No; since he has no right to it, and since the present, or compensation, belongs to the community.

212. May a religious *retain* a thing without permission?

A religious violates his vow if he retain, in his own keeping or in that of another, any object or money, above all when he places it under lock and key, or tries to keep it away from the notice of his superiors.

213. Is it a great fault for a religious to keep money without permission?

" One of the greatest faults that a Brother can commit, and which of itself is sufficient to draw the malediction of God upon him, is to have money in private. " (Rules, XIX., 10.) (250.)

214. When we have the permission of the local superior to retain a thing, may it be concealed during the regular visit?

No, because this would imply that the permission is illicit (188) or fraudulent (186).

215. May we *receive* presents offered to ourselves personally without permission?

A religious offends against the vow when, without permission, he receives for himself anything whatsoever from any person.

In certain exceptional cases, it would not be forbidden to accept a thing provisionally, presuming a permission and with the intention of asking it formally ; but, in order to keep it, the authorization to do so is indispensable (201).

216. May we receive presents which are offered to the community?

When there is question of presents offered to the community, a religious may, and generally he should presume upon the permission to receive them. An arbitrary refusal would not wound the vow of poverty, but might be a fault against the charity we owe to the community.

217. To whom do the gifts or presents made to a religious belong?

In general, the gifts or presents made to a religious belong to the community.

218. Do inheritances, bequests, and other considerable gifts also belong to the community?

An inheritance, a bequest, and other gifts of this kind, made to a religious having simple vows (177) do not, by right, belong to the community. Nevertheless, if the circumstances make it plain that it is not to a *private individual*, but to a *religious considered as such*, or to a member of the community, that the gift is made, it is, properly speaking, the community that acquires it.

When the things which may be acquired by a religious require an act of his will to become his own, he must, except otherwise provided for by his Rules, obtain the permission of his superior.

219. Is it allowable to receive an object or money on deposit?

It would be a transgression of the vow of poverty to receive a deposit properly so called, that is, to receive a thing which we would engage ourselves to keep and return at our risk and peril.

If we were to keep the object or money without responsibility, for a short time, it would not be sinning against the vow, but against the spirit of poverty, and against obedience, which does not ordinarily permit a simple religious to render such services.

220. May a religious, without permission, ask alms for the poor, or accept money or necessaries for them?

No; he cannot ask for or receive such gifts without the permission of his superior.

221. What sin is committed in such cases?

There is a sin against obedience, but not against the vow of poverty, unless the religious appropriate what he has received for the poor (227).

222. May a religious *borrow* without permission?

A religious sins against poverty in borrowing anything without permission, either from a religious of the community, or from anyone outside of the community, as a relative or friend, even should the thing be loaned spontaneously. By borrowing, we, at least, have the use of the thing which constitutes an act of proprietorship.

However, borrowing from a religious of the community is less serious than borrowing from a person outside of it.

223. In what case may the act of borrowing be without a sin against the vow?

There may be only a fault against obedience, when we borrow from a religious of the community an object of little value, and for a short time only: superiors, in such a case, ordinarily not intending to oblige otherwise.

Moreover, there is no fault of any kind, for certain trifling acts of this kind, which are

authorized by a tacit permission in the community (235).

224. May a religious *buy* anything without permission?

A religious cannot, without violating his vow, buy anything of his own authority, and he must always abide by the will of his superior as to the nature, the quality, and the quantity of the purchases which he may be ordered to make, as well as to the price he is to pay. In the same way, he who is authorized to buy a determined object cannot use this authorization to buy another.

225. What do you mean by *disposing* of an object?

To dispose of an object is to give, sell, exchange, loan, or lose it, or to allow it to spoil.

226. May a religious *give* anything without permission?

A religious cannot, without sinning against his vow, give any object whatever to another religious or to any other person outside of his community. Other things being equal, the fault is less if we give to a religious of the same house, because the community suffers less injury, and because the superior is not supposed to be so much opposed to it.

227. May a religious distribute alms without permission?

A religious cannot, without permission, distribute alms when such distribution has not been determined by the donor. Todo so would be the

exercise of an act of dominion and ownership, and, consequently, a violation of the vow of poverty.

But when the owner has determined upon the object, a religious who transmits them without permission does not offend against the vow of poverty, being only the channel and instrument of the charity of another; he is simply acting against obedience.

228. What is to be thought of the permission given to a religious to receive money for the purpose of bestowing it in alms at will?

This permission might be given for once, and for a trifling sum; but a general authorization without restriction, or for a long time, should not be easily granted; it would be very dangerous, and would give rise to many abuses.

229. May a religious, under the pretext of doing good, make presents of small devotional objects?

A religious may give away trifling devotional objects, such as medals, beads, etc. But he would offend against the vow, if, even under the pretext of doing good, he would make these presents without at least a tacit permission.

230. What is to be thought of certain presents made by religious to their relatives?

If these presents be made with permission, the vow of poverty, ordinary speaking, will not suffer injury. However, those religious cannot but be censured, who, from an ill-regulated affection and under futile pretexts, are constantly asking

permission to make presents to their parents even of expensive and altogether worldly things. In such cases, there is, at least, a violation of the virtue of poverty, especially as superiors often grant them only to avoid a greater evil. The permission may even, in certain cases, exceed their power (184).

231. May a religious, of his own authority, *sell* anything?

A religious cannot sell anything without permission, even under the pretext of the interests of the community. He who may be authorized to sell anything, even should it be the fruit of his labor, cannot of his own authority increase or lessen the price; he must abide by what has been determined upon by his superior.

232. May a religious *exchange* an object for another of the same value, without permission?

Exchange is an act of ownership which a religious cannot exercise without permission.

233. May we, without permission, change the object or purpose of things?

No, this would be an act of ownership, and consequently a sin against the vow. Thus, wood intended for joinery cannot be used for fuel; and money intended for travelling expenses cannot be used for another purpose, even though it were a good work (210).

234. May a religious *lend* without permission?

To lend without permission is a violation of the vow, and the sin may easily be a mortal sin

for a simple religious, when he lends to persons outside of the house; to judge correctly in this matter, it is necessary to examine the value of the thing loaned, the safety of its return and the duration of the loan.

It is readily understood, that there is a great difference between lending to persons in the house, and those outside of the house; in the first case, the community loses little or nothing; it is often very different in the second (265).

235. Does not a legitimate custom authorize certain loans in communities?

When there is question of ordinary things and of little value, a tacit or presumed permission generally excuses these loans among religious. But if, in these trifling loans, we must avoid narrow-mindedness as well as unkindness; we must also guard against relaxed notions on the subject of poverty.

236. Is it a sin against the vow to allow objects destined for our use *to be lost* or *spoiled?*

It is a sin, if not against the vow, at least against the virtue of poverty, if, through our neglect, we lose or spoil objects that we have received for our own use. We must bestow upon our clothing, our shoes, and other things we use, the same care that a prudent person would exercise in the world; it is proper that we should be even more careful of them, since we do not own these objects, but they belong to religion.

237. When we are changed to another community, may we take anything along with us?

When a religious is changed to another community, he cannot take anything along with him without permission: to do so would be a theft from the community he has left. We must, however, except manuscripts and certain objects which the Rules or the declarations of the higher Superiors authorize us to take along with us.

238. Is this obligation also imposed upon a local superior who is changed from his residence?

A superior is only the administrator, and not the proprietor of the goods of his community: he cannot, therefore, any more than an inferior, take along anything but what is allowed by the Rules or by the new superior who takes his place. Motives of delicacy and good example will suggest the greatest reserve in the permissions he may ask.

239. Is it necessary, when changed to another community, to obtain a renewal of the permissions we have received?

The permissions of a local superior are valid for an inferior in that community alone. The latter, when changed to another community, should obtain a renewal of the special permissions which he has received, unless they had been granted by the higher Superiors to be valid in all the houses of the Institute.

240. What are the obligations of religious, having simple vows, with regard to personal property?

In such cases a religious must adhere strictly to what is determined for his Institute, and, un lessin unforeseen cases, he should not do anything with respect to his personal property, without permission.

241. May a religious having simple vows freely dispose of possessions of which he has kept the bare ownership?

The practice of the various Institutes is neither general nor invariable on this subject.

In the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the religious dispose of their patrimonial estates only with the authorization of the Superior General; it is to him that they must address themselves for the surrender of any right, income, forgiveness of a debt, the employment of their possessions in almsgiving or presents, or their partial or total alienation.

242. Is it allowable to add the income of one's property to the capital?

No; for though a religious be allowed to retain his property, he is not therefore allowed to increase it by adding its income thereto, unless his Rules so authorize him.

However, it is permitted to expend upon real estate as much of its income as may be necessary to keep it in good order.

243. What permission is necessary to change what has once been regulated with regard to the administration, the usufruct or the use of personal property?

In this matter also, it is necessary to adhere

to what has been determined for one's Institute.

In that of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, recourse is had to the authorization of the Superior General, either for a first arrangement or for any subsequent change that may be desired (300).

244. What should a religious do who possesses bonds or other interest-bearing securities?

He should entrust them to a relative or some other trustworthy person who will pay the income to him in whose favor the religious disposes of it. They may also, if the superiors judge proper, be deposited or placed with the community, and the income disposed of according to the permissions received. But there would be serious inconveniences should the religious be authorized to keep them himself (259).

245. Is it becoming for a religious to be authorized to distribute himself the revenue derived from his personal estate?

No, it is much better to confide this to a trustworthy person. This solicitude about temporal affairs is a source of preoccupation and embarrassment, and frequently of faults against the virtue of poverty.

When the management of money is added ıereto, the vow of poverty is easily violated.

246. What is to be observed as to permissions which are too general with regard to the disposal of one's income?

These permissions bear a strong resemblance to an unrestricted administration of property;

they are very dangerous and easily degenerate into abuse. If, therefore, a Religious has not, once for all, disposed of his income (300), let him, at least, submit each alms, each particular gift, to the authorization of his superior (241).

247. Are the acts of ownership, exercised by a religious having simple vows, invalid in respect of his personal property?

A Religious having simple vows should not, without permission, perform any act of ownership with respect to his patrimonial estate (240). However, these acts are not *invalid*, that is, the gifts, sales, loans, etc., relative to these goods, although *unlawful*, preserve all their validity.

Art. IV. — *Duties, with regard to poverty, of superiors and others who fill certain offices.*

248. What obligations does the vow of poverty impose upon superiors?

The vow of poverty imposes upon superiors certain duties: 1° with regard to themselves; 2° with regard to their inferiors; 3° with regard to the property of religion.

249. What are the duties of superiors with regard to themselves?

Superiors have made the same vow of poverty as their inferiors; they have, therefore, the same personal obligations.

250. What permissions may superiors grant themselves?

It is lawful for a superior to grant himself the same permissions that he may grant his inferiors (257).

251. What care must a superior exercise in what he grants himself?

He must be careful not to fall into the illusion of exaggerating his wants or the requirements of his charge. For this purpose, he will wisely adopt the rule of being less indulgent to himself than to his inferiors, both for the purpose of edifying them, and to avoid the danger of too weak a condescension.

252. What is to be thought of him who would allow himself certain superfluities under the pretext of requirements of his office?

Such a one would forget that the first requirement of his office is to give an example of poverty, and that the superfluities he would grant himself in furniture, clothing or other things, would only tend to lower him in the estimation of his inferiors and even of people of the world.

253. What else must a superior avoid?

He must also avoid excessive care of his health, especially when such care is expensive, as well as to allow himself certain indulgences, such as short journeys, outings, etc., which, but little in harmony with the Rules and obedience, may also, in consequence of the expense they entail, be a violation of poverty.

254. What is a superior to do with regard to the income from his personal property?

The best way for him, as well as for others, is to dispose of it once for all with the requisite authorization (300). He must, at least, have the permission of his superiors for each particular disposal.

255. What aggravates the faults of superiors against poverty?

Besides the faults against poverty, there is generally scandal.

256. What are the duties of superiors towards their inferiors in the matter of poverty?

A superior must see that his inferiors exactly observe the vow of poverty. He will endeavor to instruct them upon the obligations imposed upon them by this vow; he will form them faithfully to practise it, as well as the virtue, in all things, and he will not, through a weak condescension, tolerate its violation when he can prudently prevent it.

257. What permissions may superiors give to their inferiors?

Superiors can only grant such permissions to their inferiors as are conformable to the Rule and to the legitimate customs of the Institute. Any authorization that exceeds their powers is of no value.

258. Should superiors readily grant general permissions?

A general permission consists in granting a thing to many in the same matter, or to an individual in many matters. Such permissions are, in their nature, legitimate, but they should be given prudently and sparingly. They may cause relaxation of discipline and thus become illicit. It is proper, therefore, that they should ordinarily be granted to a definite number of persons only, and for a limited time.

It may here be observed, that a superior can never grant an irrevocable permission. This would be contrary to the vow.

259. Is it prudent to allow inferiors to keep money?

A superior should never tolerate, unless for a short and definite time, that an inferior keep money, whether it be his personal income, or arise from the sale of anything, or from alms he may have received for any good works.

Money from any source whatever should always be left with the Director or the Procurator of the community.

This applies equally to bonds, bills of exchange, and other securities representing value.

Neither should Religious be allowed to keep postage stamps in large quantities. This would be an abuse and a peril.

260. What must we avoid in the observance of poverty?

We must avoid, under the pretext of economy and of the observation of the vow, refusing or

making inferiors wait too long for what they need and what is conformable to the Rules.

261. What are the duties of superiors in the administration and disposal of the property of religion?

Superiors are neither owners nor masters; therefore, they cannot administer the property of religion except as the representatives and instruments of higher authority, and in conformity with the Rules and legitimate customs.

262. May a superior procure for his community or for an inferior superfluous objects?

A superior should not allow the purchase, even under the pretext of cheapness, of things that are superfluous, or but little in harmony with the religious state. In so doing, an erroneous interpretation of economy would make him offend, if not against the vow, at least against the virtue of poverty, because it would be contrary to the Rules and religious simplicity, and, at the same time, cause disedification to people of the world. Superfluous or fancy objects should not find entrance into a community, even when offered as presents. The only ornament of a religious house should be neatness and simplicity.

263. May a superior dispose of the property of the community?

A superior is not allowed to dispose of the property of his community; in so doing, he would expose himself to the censures of the Church.

The Rule of Approbation of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools says on this

subject, section 12 : " That neither the Directors nor Visitors deputed *pro tempore* be allowed to alienate the funds, chattels, or real estate, without the consent of the Superior General and his Assistants *pro tempore.*"

264. May superiors borrow?

In general, superiors are not allowed to borrow without due authorization.

265. May superiors lend?

Superiors should not permit lending or lend themselves anything of importance without being previously authorized.

A community is nearly always exposed to loss by lending : there is little hurry or care in returning things, either because little heed is paid to one's demand to have the thing returned, or because it is an accepted opinion in the world that religious are always rich enough.

266. May the superiors of communities having simple vows make or allow presents to be made?

They may sometimes make presents provided it be with discretion, without extravagance and through motives of gratitude, charity, or any other laudable end. If there were question of presents of any considerable value, they would be obliged to obtain proper authorization.

267. What may superiors allow to be sold?

Superiors may allow the sale of produce, the result of the work or industry of the religious;

but they are not allowed to sell again to outsiders, *with a profit*, objects bought for the community or for the work it has to carry on. This would be the carrying on of business, which is forbidden by the Church to Religious, under severe penalties.

268. What are the duties of superiors with reference to the account they must render of their administration?

They are obliged to render this account with loyalty and simplicity. It would therefore be a failure in their official duties to misrepresent a transaction that has not been successful, a somewhat important present which has been made without authorization, a considerable loss of money caused by imprudence or accident, etc.; for a greater reason, to conceal, under any pretext whatsoever, any portion of the funds of the community from the knowledge of the higher Superiors or their delegates.

269. In a general way, what should a superior do in order to administer the property of the community wisely and religiously?

He should : 1° make himself familiar with his duties and powers; 2° keep his accounts faithfully and correctly; 3° never, in his administration, keep anything hidden from the higher Superiors; 4° consult them in doubtful or important cases.

Pursuing this line of conduct, a superior acts with safety of conscience and with the blessing of God.

270. What are the duties, with regard to poverty, of those who have any position to fill?

They are bound carefully to adhere to what is indicated by the Rules or by the instructions given them by the superior of the community.

271. May he, who is charged with the distribution of certain objects to the community, distribute them at pleasure?

No, he must follow the instructions given him, and not provide for the wants of the Brothers according to his own caprice. He would not be permitted, for instance, of his own accord, to give a better garment or more delicate food to a religious, because the latter would be more in sympathy with him.

272. How are they to act who are charged with the sales or purchases for the community?

They must follow the instructions of their superior and refrain from doing anything against his will.

"They will be careful, says the B. de la Salle, not to have the use of money, except to employ it according to the instructions of Brother Director, and not as being its master; and thus they will consider themselves responsible to God for the use they will have made of it, above all, of what they will have spent without permission." (Rules, xv., 10.)

273. In what respect are they who fill an office more particularly exposed to fail in poverty?

In allowing the loss or deterioration of things confided to their care. Thus, a cook who would

allow provisions to spoil, a refectorian who would allow the wine to sour, a procurator, who, by his fault or by not having avail ed himself of favorable opportunities, would buy things not fit for use or too dear; a linen-keeper who would allow clothing to be moth-eaten, etc., would sin more or less grievously against poverty according to the importance of the matter and the degree of his negligence. It is proper, however, to remark, that ordinary and reasonable care are sufficient, and that involuntary losses and deterioration cannot be imputed to them (236).

273. Should not every religious, in a certain manner, watch that the property of the community be not lost or spoiled?

Every member of a community should be solicitous about its interests. He will, therefore, if necessary, give notice of anything which he may have remarked that might cause any damage; he will even, in certain urgent cases, presume upon the permission or orders of his superior with the view of preventing a loss or damage.

Thus, if it rain, he will immediately remove an exposed object that may suffer damage from the rain; in the same way, he will secure a door or window beaten by the wind, etc. In this and similar cases, a religious should never say : *that is not my business; it does not belong to my charge.*

One would sin against the virtue of poverty, if, by his negligence, he would allow the loss or deterioration of an object, even were he not charged with watching over its preservation.

Art. V. — *Nature and grievousness of faults committed against the vow of poverty.*

275. Does the vow of poverty oblige under the penalty of sin?

Without doubt, it obliges under the penalty of sin, and the sin is mortal or venial according to the gravity or lightness of the matter.

276. What amount constitutes a grave matter against the vow of poverty?

Generally speaking, an offence against poverty requires, at least, the same amount as in the case of theft.

"At the present time, a theft is pronounced a grave matter, if it amounts to a franc and sometimes to less, when it is to the detriment of the poor; to two or three francs, when it is to the detriment of workmen who live upon their daily wages; to four or five francs, when there is question of persons moderately rich; to six or seven francs when it concerns those who are ordinarily rich." (P. Gury.)

277. What matter is reputed grave when a theft is committed to the detriment of a community?

At the present time, it is considered that a theft of about six francs would constitute a grave matter.

A larger sum would be required to constitute

a grave violation, were we to dispose of the property of the community, not to a stranger, but to our own advantage, or in favor of another member of the community.

The matter should be still more considerable, when a religious receives a thing from a stranger to give it to others, and also when he irregularly disposes of his personal property or income.

Generally, the fault is not reputed grave, when we take an object even of considerable value, but which is not consumed by use, if we have not the intention of always keeping it.

278. Is not the sin against the vow frequently also a sin against justice?

Every theft or culpable damage with regard to a stranger or the community is not only against the vow, but also against *justice* (206, 207), which entails the obligation of restitution.

279. How is a religious to make restitution, if he has stolen from a stranger, and if he still have personal property?

A religious should make restitution from his personal property if he still have any. However, in order to dispose thus of his personal property, he will ask permission of his Superiors, a permission which he can easily obtain without, in any manner, making his fault known to them.

280. How can a religious make restitution to his community?

1° The Superiors can remit or condone the debt contracted.

2° In default of this remission, it is easy for a religious, if he still have personal property (279), to repair the injury he has done without making his fault known to others than his confessor.

3° If he have nothing to dispose of, he may try to compensate for this injury, either by greater labor, or by saving something of what the community gives him.

4° He can also, in certain cases, have recourse to his relatives, requesting them to give something to his community.

In general, it is well to have an understanding with one's confessor as to the means to be taken to make restitution.

Art. VI. — *On the virtue of poverty.*

281. In what does the virtue of poverty consist?

The virtue of poverty is a virtue which regulates our affections with regard to temporal goods, and the use we should make of them.

282. What difference is there between the virtue and the vow of poverty?

Besides the general differences already indicated (129), it must further be observed with regard to poverty, that the immediate and direct object of the vow is an effective privation by the renunciation of acts of ownership; the immediate object of the virtue is an affective privation, it is poverty of spirit or interior detachment.

283. Does the virtue of poverty oblige under the penalty of sin?

If the inordinate attachment were to extend to any grievous act against justice, charity, etc., there would be mortal sin. But, except in this case, which, besides, is very rare among religious, faults against the virtue of poverty are only venial.

284. In how many ways may a religious offend against the virtue of poverty?

A religious may, without violating the vow, offend against the virtue of poverty : 1° by voluntary desires and regrets against this virtue; 2° by an inordinate attachment to any object, even though necessary or of little value; 3° by the use of fancy or superfluous objects.

285. What regrets and desires are opposed to the virtue of poverty?

Regrets for what we have sacrificed ; voluntary, though conditional desires of what we have renounced by vow, such as saying that we would desire such and such things if we had not made the vow of poverty.

286. Why is it wrong to attach ourselves excessively to objects of little value?

The trifling value of an object does not justify us in excessively attaching ourselves to it : it is not the object, but the inordinate affection that constitutes the sin.

The spirit of detachment and renunciation,

which should be characteristic of religious poverty, is explained in some Institutes by the very language itself. We say: *our* book, *our* desk, *our* cell, etc., instead of saying *my* book, *my* desk, *my* cell, etc.

287. Is it a sin to keep superfluous objects even with permission?

The use of fancy and superfluous objects is very much opposed to the religious state, and is scandalous even in the eyes of the world. The superior who gives, as well as the inferior who avails himself of the permission, sins at least against the virtue of poverty. Still, a considerable excess would be required to constitute a mortal sin when superfluous things are kept with the permission of one's superior (189).

288. What must be our standard in deciding upon what is considered fanciful or superfluous in a Congregation?

To decide as to what is fanciful or superfluous, we must be guided by the Constitutions, the declarations of the Superiors, the scope and work of the Congregation, and upon the poverty professed therein. What would be a fancy object for a religious of St Francis might not be the same for a religious of a less strict Order.

In every Congregation, moreover, what is superfluous for the generality of the religious, may not be so for one who is infirm or old, or for one who has to fill such or such a position. It belongs to the charity and prudence of superiors to see

what is necessary in particular cases, whilst, at the same time, they must act in conformity with the spirit and the traditions of the Congregation.

289. What is the principal duty imposed by the virtue of poverty?

It is the *common life*, which is also for religious the source of the most abundant merits.

The holy Council of Trent strongly recommends it, and it admonishes superiors to see that it be observed.

290. In what does the common life consist in a religious house?

The common life consists in this, that every one, even the superiors, be content with what is given to the others in the matter of nourishment, clothing, lodging, and other things of this nature.

291. Is the common life very important in a religious house?

The common life is the most assured rampart of religious discipline; hence, no one should be dispensed from it without a real necessity.

Age, services rendered, gifts made to the community are no reasons for dispensation; but, on the contrary, aged religious and those who occupy more exalted positions, are so much the more obliged to subject themselves to the common rule, because, in order to cause it to be loved and accepted by others, there is no means more efficacious than example itself.

292. What is to be thought of religious who would claim certain privileges as a sort of right?

A religious would deceive himself were he to believe that his Congregation is indebted to him because of his age or his talents, and that it should, in a certain way, requite his services in not refusing him certain superfluities, certain objects of fancy, journeys without real utility, presents or favors for his relatives, etc. He would thus ignore the very nature of religious renunciation; he would equally forget, that in serving his Institute, he has only paid a debt of justice and gratitude.

293. Are certain dispensations contrary to the common life?

Dispensations required for just motives are not contrary to the common life. Superiors are the legitimate judges of exceptional cases (288).

294. Does not too great attachment to one's family expose us to offend against poverty?

Yes, because this inordinate attachment may preoccupy the religious to the detriment of his employment and the prejudice of the community, and too often prompt him to importune the Superiors to obtain favors for his relatives.

295. Do we offend against poverty by writing or receiving letters without permission?

There is no direct violation of poverty in this case. But, such clandestine correspondence seldom fails to lead to a breach of poverty either by

the disposal of certain things unknown to our superiors, or by sending or receiving presents.

Besides, clandestine correspondence has always been considered a matter of moment, which the superiors are obliged severely to repress.

296. Is a community obliged to procure for a religious expensive remedies?

It is the part of charity and prudence to procure for a sick religious what may be conducive to the restoration of his health. However, a community is not obliged to procure extraordinary and very costly remedies, such as to consult renowned specialists, to spend a season at a watering-place, etc.

297. What must be done, if the doctor orders a season at a watering-place, and when relatives are willing to bear the expense?

It belongs to superiors to judge of what is to be done. In case of refusal, the sick religious will consider himself happy to do the will of God manifested by obedience, and to have the occasion of practising poverty and abandonment to Providence.

298. Is it advantageous for a religious having simple vows to dispose completely of the property of which he may hold the bare ownership?

In general, it is not opportune to dispose of one's property as long as one has but temporary vows; at least, it should be done under certain conditions to provide for the case of leaving. But

it cannot be otherwise than advantageous for one professed with perpetual vows to renounce his possessions completely, above all, after a certain number of years in religious life. This act of effective and total detachment is very agreeable to God, and well calculated to detach the soul from earthly affections. However, a religious will not decide anything with precipitation and without the advice and consent of his Superiors. There are cases in which prudence will dictate delay.

299. To whom should one's personal property be left?

In the first place, one must comply with the obligations imposed by justice, filial piety, charity, and even the necessity of preventing dissensions and scandal. In the next place, one will consider it a pious duty to bestow the larger portion upon the poor and for the promotion of good works; this is what is most in harmony with the will of God and the evangelical counsels.

300. What should be done with the income derived from personal property?

It is very advantageous in many respects to dispose of it once for all in favor of one's relatives, of the Institute, or of pious works. This final disposal, which the Church besides imposes in a great number of cases, is certainly in greatest conformity with poverty, and most efficaciously detaches the soul from temporal solicitude.

When, as in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the Constitutions or a legit-

imate custom allow greater latitude on this subject, one must at least be careful not to make any change in what has once been regulated, without being duly authorized to do so (243).

301. What are the various degrees of religious poverty ?

The first is carefully to abstain from every *act of proprietorship :* this is the matter of the vow.

The second is to *deprive* ourselves of *superfluities*, and to be content with necessaries, without attaching our heart even to them : this is the obligatory matter of the virtue.

The third is to *prefer what is least*, and to love the privation of what is necessary : this is the perfection of religious poverty. The more real and effective the renunciation, the more perfect will religious poverty be.

302. With what sentiments will a good religious practise the renunciation of temporal goods ?

A religious who is animated with the spirit of poverty will practise renunciation of temporal goods : 1° with sentiments of mortification and penance; 2° with a contempt for worldly goods, which will make him esteem only those which are heavenly ; 3° with the desire of " rendering himself more and more conformable to Jesus Christ, who, for the love of us, suffered want in everything during His life ". (B. de la Salle.)

303. How should a religious look upon poverty?

As the walls *of religion*, its foundation and rampart, as much for the entire body as for each of its members. But poverty is still more in the eyes of a good religious : it is to him a *mother* whom he tenderly loves and whose austere but sweet authority he joyfully accepts.

304. What does B. de la Salle say on the love of poverty?

" Cherish poverty as Jesus Christ loved it, and as the most sure means you can take to advance in perfection. "

CHAPTER V.

ON RELIGIOUS CHASTITY.

305. What is the vow of chastity?

The vow of chastity is that by which a religious obliges himself : 1° to renounce marriage; 2° to avoid every exterior and interior act already forbidden by the sixth and ninth commandments of God.

306. Is every fault against the virtue of chastity also a violation of the vow?

Yes, because in this matter the object of the virtue and of the vow is the same : the vow only adds a more strict obligation.

307. How many sins does a religious commit who violates his vow of chastity?

A religious who violates his vow of chastity commits two sins : 1° a sin against the sixth or ninth commandment; 2° a sin against the virtue of religion, that is, a sacrilege, which he must also make known in confession, unless the confessor already knows the circumstance of the vow.

In addition to this double sin, there may be a third against charity, if scandal were given ; and the fault would be one of exceptional gravity, if it were of such a nature as to cover a community and a whole Congregation with the infamy attached to such crimes.

308. Is every sin against chastity a mortal sin ?

Thoughts and desires, as well as actions which directly offend against chastity, are always mortal sins when there is full consent. In this case, there is no lightness of matter.

If the deliberation be imperfect, or the consent incomplete, the sin is only venial.

309. Besides the faults directly opposed to chastity, are there not some that offend against it indirectly ?

The faults that indirectly offend against chastity are those exterior and interior acts which expose one to its direct violation, such as too much liberty given to one's thoughts or senses, unguarded looks, familiarity and dangerous reading. Such acts become sins of greater or lesser gravity in proportion as they create a danger more or less proximate of consenting to sinful pleasures.

310. May not certain acts, in consequence of scandal, become grave faults in a religious ?

Certain acts which would appear less culpable in a secular, may, because of scandal, become a grievous sin in a religious ; such would be too assiduous relations, or too much familiarity with persons of the other sex.

311. What are the principal means of keeping chastity intact?

The principal means of preserving chastity are: prayer, mortification, vigilance, guard over the senses, and especially the eyes, shunning idleness and occasions, care to avoid too intimate friendship, humility, recollection, a great devotion to Mary, and, above all, for holy Communion.

312. Why must we pray in order to preserve purity?

Because, as the Wise Man says, man cannot remain pure unless God give him the grace. (Wisdom, VIII., 21.) One cannot, therefore, too much have recourse to God by prayer, in order to remain firm against temptation and be delivered from it.

313. Why must we mortify ourselves?

Because Our Lord said : *This kind* of demon *is not cast out but by prayer and fasting* (St Matt., XVII., 20); and, according to St Paul : *If you live according to the flesh, you shall die; but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.* " (Rom., VIII., 13.)

314. What should they observe with regard to temperance who desire to remain chaste?

" They will be moderate in eating and drinking, especially with regard to wine, an enemy to chastity; and they will be careful to mix it well with water. " (Rules, XX., 3.)

315. Why must we practise vigilance?

Because Our Lord says: *Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.* (St Matt., xxvi., 41.)

316. Why is guard over the senses, and especially the eyes, necessary to preserve chastity?

Because the Holy Ghost admonishes us that the *senses are the windows of the soul* and that *death* easily *enters* through them. (Jer., ix., 21.)

317. Why must we shun idleness?

Because, according to Holy Scripture, *idleness has taught much evil.* (Ecclus., xxxiii., 29.) If the enemy always find you occupied, his temptations will be rare or powerless.

318. Why must we shun occasions?

Because, according to the Wise Man, *he that loveth danger shall perish in it.* (Ecclus., iii., 27.)

319. What kind of occasions must a religious particularly avoid?

In general, those which result from contact with the world, and especially those which arise from visits received or rendered.

320. What does B. de la Salle say of visits of persons of the other sex?

" If a person of the other sex come to visit, and she speaks to one of the Brothers, even to the Brother Director, there will always be a Brother who will be witness, and who will see all that will take place; and, in case he cannot

have a companion, he will leave the parlor door open during this time. (Rules, xiv., 6.)

"When speaking to persons of the other sex, they will always keep a few steps from them, and they will never look at them fixedly. They will speak to them only in a very reserved manner and far from the least levity or familiarity." (Rules, xx., 9, 10.)

321. Can a religious refuse a duty of state because, in so doing, he may meet with danger to his virtue?

When there is question of ordinary dangers which are sometimes met with in the exercise of an employment, a religious should do what is prescribed, trust in God and in Mary, and place his chastity under the protection of obedience and charity.

But, if the occasion of offending God be *proximate,* a religious will immediately inform his superior, who, in his prudence and charity, will apply a remedy by removing the occasion if necessary.

322. Why must particular and too tender friendships be avoided?

Because these friendships, besides being much opposed to true charity in a community, enfeeble the soul and easily awaken concupiscence.

"I will speak alone," says St Francis of Sales, "to all who wish to hear: Prune, amputate and cut asunder, and do not trifle in ripping open these foolish friendships, nor in disentangling their bonds; fire and iron must be promptly

applied, and we must not treat with any tenderness a love which is so contrary to the love of God."

323. What does B. de la Salle say of particular friendship with children?

"The Brothers will love all their pupils tenderly; they will, however, not become familiar with any of them, and they will never give them anything through particular friendship, but only as a reward or for their encouragement." (Rules, VII., 13.)

"They will not touch their scholars through playfulness or familiarity: they will not touch them in the face." (Rules, XX., 7.)

324. Why must we be very humble to preserve purity?

Because humility preserves the soul in distrust of itself, and because it has a special efficacy in drawing down upon ourselves the help of grace, according to these words of St Peter: *God resisteth the proud, but giveth His grace to the humble.* (I Peter, V., 5.)

325. What means does B. de la Salle particularly indicate to preserve the angelic virtue?

Recollection. *By recollection keep so chaste, that, of heavenly bliss, you may foretaste.* It is a fact that he who is exteriorly recollected, practises vigilance over the senses and especially modesty in his looks; he who keeps interiorly recollected "places himself, says B. de la Salle, under a kind of necessity of being exclusively occupied with God and the things of God".

326. Why are we advised to have a great devotion to Mary in order to preserve purity?

Because Mary Immaculate is the *Queen of Virgins* and the special Protectress of purity. He that serves her with love, and who, above all in temptation, invokes her with confidence, cannot be overcome.

327. What is, of all means, the most efficacious to maintain ourselves in perfect chastity?

The holy Communion. The holy Eucharist is the *corn of the elect* which gives strength, *and the wine that springeth forth virgins.* (Zach. IX., 17.) " Since, then, you cannot find a more prompt or efficacious remedy for your temptations than the reception of the Body of Jesus Christ, receive it frequently, so that by this means you may be prevented from falling into sin. " (B. de la Salle, Med. 54.)

328. How must we act when we are tempted?

We must vividly recall the presence of God, invoke the aid of His grace, and immediately and energetically resist the temptation. A live coal is shaken off as soon as we feel it, otherwise it will burn and cause a great wound.

329. What should we avoid after temptation?

We should avoid being troubled and of thinking of the temptation again. We generally trouble ourselves by confounding feeling with consent. There are imaginations and bad impres-

sions that return in spite of our will; as long as we disavow and resist them, far from making us culpable, they are to us occasions of victory and merit so much the greater, as the temptation will have been stronger or more persistent.

To think of the temptation again, under the pretext of examining, is a cause of trouble, and may become the occasion of new peril.

330. What does St Liguori say, to tranquillize timorous consciences?

" A person whose conscience is timorous, should look upon it as certain that he is in the state of grace with God, unless he is *certain* that he has fallen into the sin; because it is impossible, when we are confirmed in good principles, that our will revolt against God without our knowing it in a very positive manner. The contrary is the case with those who are given to vice."

331. How does B. de la Salle recommend religious to love purity?

He says : " You are in a state in which you have need of being honored by the friendship of Jesus ; cherish purity in a particular manner, since it is the favorite virtue of Our Lord, so that He may love you tenderly, and take pleasure in being with you ; for his delight is to be with pure souls. " (Med. 88.)

CHAPTER VI.

ON RELIGIOUS OBEDIENCE.

ART. I. — *On the Vow of obedience.*

332. What is the vow of obedience?

The vow of obedience is a promise made to God to obey our legitimate superiors, in all that they command according to the Rules.

333. Is this vow indispensable to the religious state?

Yes, for the religious state cannot be conceived without obedience, which is its very soul, communicating movement and life to all the members of the religious body itself, and without which that body could not subsist.

334. What is the excellence of the vow of obedience?

The vow of obedience should be regarded as the most excellent of the vows of religion : 1° because by obedience we consecrate to God our own will, which is a greater thing than the oblation of our possessions or our body by poverty and chastity; 2° because the vow of obedience is

more comprehensive than the two other vows, and includes them at least implicitly.

By the vow of obedience, a religious offers his whole soul to God; he immolates himself as a perfect holocaust.

335. Is a religious bound, in virtue of his vow, to obey the Sovereign Pontiff?

Yes, he is bound, in virtue of his vow, to obey the Sovereign Pontiff, as the first superior of all religious, and, consequently, to obey the Congregations delegated who command religious in his name.

336. How far does the obligation of obeying the Sovereign Pontiff, in virtue of the vow, extend?

The obligation of obeying in virtue of the vow, when the Sovereign Pontiff commands religious, does not extend beyond the promises made in the respective Institutes, according to their approved Rules.

When there is question of precepts binding all Christians, a religious is not thereby bound in virtue of his vow of obedience, but in the same manner as the rest of the faithful.

337. Is a religious obliged to obey the decrees of the General Chapters of his Institute?

Yes, when these are made in virtue of the vow.

338. Can every superior command in virtue of the vow?

Ordinarily the power of commanding in virtue of the vow is confided by the Rules only to the chief superiors, either general or local.

It is thus in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, in which we engage ourselves by vow to obey the *Superior of the Society* and the *particular Directors* who are appointed by him. (Rules, XVIII., 3.)

339. May the subordinate officials command in virtue of the vow?

No. In the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the subordinate officials, such as Sub-Directors, Inspectors, etc., cannot command in virtue of the vow (355); but the Rule observes, that "the Brothers should be very submissive and well united with them, and have great respect for them." (Chap. XI., 2; chap. XII., 14; chap. XVIII., 3).

In a general manner, the *virtue* of obedience requires that we be submissive to the subordinate officials in the things relating to their employment, and according to the degree of authority with which they are invested; this is necessary for the good order of a religious family.

340. What are the things which superiors may command?

Superiors may command all that is *according to Rule*, that is, not only all that is explicitly contained in it, but also what is implied, and, consequently, all that is necessary or useful for its perfect observance.

341. What are the things which superiors cannot command?

Superiors cannot command : 1° what would be contrary to the law of God or of the Church,

even should the sin be only venial; 2° what would be contrary to the Rule, or foreign to the duties it imposes.

342. What should a religious do, should his superior declare, in a particular case, that such a precept of the Church does not oblige?

When a superior, in consequence of a reasonable impediment, declares, in a particular case, that such a precept of the Church, such as that of abstinence, or fast, ceases to oblige, the inferior may and should abide by this declaration, unless there be an *evident* error.

It is the same, for a greater reason, if there be question of some prescription of the Rule.

343. May a superior impose extraordinary penances, foreign to the Rules or customs of the Institute?

Extraordinary penances, such as prolonged abstinence or fasting, cannot be imposed, except in rare cases; for instance, if it were necessary to repair a great scandal.

344. Should the order to go to a foreign country be considered as imposing something heroic or *beyond* the Rule?

Generally no, unless there were question of going to a pagan country, with great danger of losing one's liberty or life. At the present time particularly, in consequence of the facility of communications, expatriation should not, unless in some exceptional cases, be looked upon as constituting a heroic act, nor even as a very difficult act.

345. May a religious be commanded to devote himself to the service of a fellow-religious who is attacked with a contagious disease?

It is not considered as being beyond the Rule, to order a religious to attend one of his Brothers who is suffering from a contagious disease.

346. May a superior, for a reasonable end, command useless or even ridiculous things?

He can do so with the view of trying the obedience of an inferior, or to make him acquire humility and to perfect him in virtue, and this is the ordinary motive of such commands.

347. What should a religious do, if he doubt whether the thing commanded be good or bad, contrary or not to the Constitutions?

When there is doubt, the presumption is in favor of the superior, and the inferior *must* obey. Even if the thing were in itself really bad, the inferior who is in doubt, not only does not sin in obeying, but he has also the merit of obedience.

However, in doubt, we can always have recourse to higher authority, when circumstances admit of it.

348. What is the precise matter of the vow of obedience?

The precise matter of the vow of obedience is solely the act which the superior commands in virtue of the vow.

A simple injunction constitutes the object, not of the *vow*, but of the *virtue* of obedience.

346. When is mortal sin committed against the vow?

A religious sins mortally against the vow of obedience when he refuses to obey, *in a grave matter,* a command of his superior, imposed *in virtue of holy obedience.*

350. In what case would an act of disobedience, even in a light matter, be a mortal sin?

A religious commits a mortal sin against his vow, when he refuses to obey an order, even in a light matter, through *formal contempt* of the authority of his superior.

Ordinarily speaking, the religious who would dare to say to his superior : *I will not obey; I will not do that,* would be considered as having disobeyed with contempt of the authority, whatever may have been the object of the command.

351. Would there be *formal* disobedience if the contempt were not for the *authority?*

If the contempt were not an attack upon the *authority,* but simply because of a defect which the inferior supposed in the person of the superior, or in the thing commanded, there would be no formal violation of the vow of obedience, at least before the tribunal of conscience; but the exterior act of refusal would be liable to the same disciplinary penalties as the violation of the vow; and these penalties, the disobedient religious would be in conscience bound to undergo. Besides, too often the distinction between the authority and the defects of a superior, or his

manner of commanding, is but a vain subterfuge of proud or fault-finding religious.

352. When does a superior command under the penalty of sin in virtue of the vow?

A superior commands under the penalty of sin in virtue of the vow when he employs these formulas : *In virtue of holy obedience*, or *In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, and other such formulas.

353. What sin does he commit who violates the vow of obedience?

In violating his vow, he commits a sin against the *virtue of religion*, which is a sacrilege. Besides, it is more probable, according to St Liguori and other theologians, that he commits another sin against *justice*, because he violates the right of the superior, who commands in virtue of his power of domination (360), and because of the donation of himself which the religious makes to his Institute in the act of his religious profession (147).

354. Can a superior oblige under the penalty of mortal sin, in a light matter?

A superior cannot oblige in virtue of the vow under the penalty of mortal sin in a light matter. However, it must be observed, that in a thing which may appear trivial in itself the matter may easily be grave, by reason of accompanying circumstances, or the end proposed.

355. Is not disobedience to a subordinate official sometimes a sin against the vow?

An inferior would sin against the vow in disobeying a subordinate official, if the latter had received from the superior a special delegation to command in virtue of the vow. An inferior would also sin against the vow, were he to disobey a subordinate official with *formal contempt for authority*.

356. Is it proper for a superior often to resort to his right of commanding in virtue of the vow?

A superior should only rarely, and for really weighty motives, command under the penalty of sin, even venial sin; otherwise he would leave his religious in constant disquietude and in great danger of offending God. Generally speaking, it is better for the superior to show himself as a father than as a master, and that he do not use all his authority towards his inferiors.

357. Does not a superior deprive his inferiors of the merit of the vow, if he use his right of commanding but rarely?

Far from it; on the contrary, he accustoms them to obey from motives of love rather than from the sole fear of offending God. Moreover, a religious who obeys the simple will of his superior has the merit of the vow, because, though there be no formal command, the vow extends over all the acts of religious obedience. Whenever a religious obeys, he does so, at least implicitly, in view of the vow, through respect and love for

it, and with the desire of observing it as perfectly as possible.

358. If a religious leave his Order without being dispensed from his vows, is he still obliged to obey his superior?

Such a religious is still bound by his vows; if, therefore, his superiors judge proper to command him, he is bound to obey.

Art. II. — *On the virtue of obedience.*

359. What is the virtue of obedience?

Obedience is a virtue which inclines the will to submit to legitimate superiors, as the representatives of the authority of God.

360. Is there any difference between the virtue and the vow of obedience?

The vow and the virtue differ in the first place, as to the motive and object. The real motive of the virtue of obedience is *justice*, which requires that an inferior submit to his legitimate superiors; the real motive of the vow is *religion*, which requires us to be faithful to the promise made to God. The object of the virtue is, therefore, every *just* command of superiors whoever they may be, temporal or spiritual; the vow has for its object only the commands of superiors

charged with exacting what has been *promised* to God.

In the second place, the virtue extends to that which is simply of counsel, and may be exercised by interior acts more or less perfect. The vow is confined to what is determined under the penalty of sin.

361. What does the virtue of obedience in the religious state embrace?

The virtue of obedience extends : 1° to all the ordinances of the Rule; 2° to all commands, desires, or counsels of superiors.

Now, as the Rule and the will of superiors embrace all the acts of religious life, it may be said that the virtue of obedience extends to all that a religious does, so that indifferent actions are sanctified by this virtue, and acts, good in themselves, would lose their merit if they were opposed to it.

362. Does the virtue of obedience oblige under the penalty of sin?

Obedience, inasmuch as it is a *religious virtue,* obliges under the penalty of sin only when the superior commands in virtue of the vow.

A religious might sin against the virtue of obedience, were he to transgress the orders of legitimate superiors, either of the Church or State; in such a case it would no longer be because of his vow, but because of duties which are common to him and all Christians.

363. Does not the Religious then commit any fault in disobeying the simple injunctions of his superiors ?

The simple injunctions of superiors do not oblige *of themselves* under the penalty of sin. But the disobedience of religious, in this case, is nearly always sinful, because of the scandal given, or of the principle which produces it, as pride, sensuality, sloth, etc. (150).

Moreover, he who would thus accustom himself to disobey, would soon lose the spirit of religious obedience; he would endanger his vow and even his vocation.

364. Should a religious, in compliance with a simple injunction, accept an employment in which he might be exposed to commit some fault ?

A religious should accept an employment assigned to him, even should he find some danger in it, but in which, nevertheless, there would not be any *proximate* danger of offending God (321). To expose himself thus for the common good is not imputed to him.

In general, a religious may, and he should make his representations, if he believed himself exposed to commit some fault; after which he should submit with humility, full of confidence that God will bless his obedience, and that grace will preserve him from sin.

365. May a religious, after the refusal of a superior, address himself to one higher in office ?

Yes, but on condition of making a sincere statement of the case, and mentioning the refusal

he has already met with; otherwise the permission may be of no value.

366. What is to be thought of a permission asked of a lower superior after the refusal of one in higher authority?

That such a permission, if granted, is often null and void, either because the higher superior has intended to withdraw from the lower the power of giving it, or because the latter would not have given it, had be been aware of the refusal.

367. What defects must a religious particularly avoid in order not to expose himself to violate obedience?

Certain defects indirectly offend against obedience, and pave the way to its formal violation: concealment, pretexts, excuses, delays, murmuring, fault-finding, and above all, prejudice or antipathy entertained towards the superior.

A religious should guard against these and other similar defects, if he wishes to avoid faults against obedience and preserve himself from a multitude of other faults.

368. What must be avoided in the exercice of obedience?

The practice of an obedience which is simply exterior, and not accompanied by submission of mind and heart. A religious, who would obey only through formality, through fear of being reproved or receiving penances, or through self-love and in view of obtaining praise or some

favor, would only have the appearance, but not the reality and the merit of obedience.

369. By how many degrees do we rise to perfect obedience?

We rise to perfect obedience by three degrees: obedience of execution, obedience of will, and obedience of judgment.

370. What should the obedience of execution be?

1° *Prompt,* that is, "obeying at once, and at the moment the thing is commanded, at a glance, at the first sound of the bell." (B. DE LA SALLE.)

2° *Entire,* that is, "not omitting anything of what we believe to be the will of the Director, not doing anything more, but doing all that he will have commanded." (Id.)

3° *Universal,* that is, "obeying all, in all that is commanded, at all times, and in all places." (Id.)

371. What is obedience of the will?

It is interior obedience, which unites the will of religious to that of their superior, and makes them will and love that which he prescribes.

372. What are the qualities of obedience of the will?

True obedience of the will is:

1° *Cordial and affectionate,* that is, "that we must accept with joy all that is commanded, and do it with a gay and cheerful mind, without being troubled at anything, how difficult or disagreable soever it may appear." (B. DE LA SALLE.)

2° *Humble and respectful*, " and, therefore, without reply, which always tends to excuse one's self, or to evade obedience. " (Id.)

3° *Christian and religious,* that is, " that we obey through virtue and the spirit of religion, as to God, whom we respect and honor in the person of the Director, who is clothed with His authority, and thus through the sole motive of obeying God and of doing His holy will. " (Id.)

373. Is it a defect to obey our superior only through affection?

A religious who would obey his superior only through affection, would perform an act of friendship rather than of obedience. But, if the affection for the superior serve but to dispose the will to obey cheerfully, and thus to prepare us to obey through pure motives of faith, it is then very useful and most desirable; we then no longer act *through affection*, but *with affection*. It is partly for this reason that St Augustine recommends to superiors the desire of being *loved rather than feared.*

374. Does the repugnance to do what is commanded detract from the perfection of obedience?

Yes, when this repugnance arises from immortification or self-love. But if it be involuntary, it becomes an occasion of increasing the merit of obedience, provided it cause no delay in the execution, or lessen the submission of mind and heart.

375. What is obedience of judgment?

Obedience of judgment consists in renouncing our own judgment in all things, and in submitting to the guidance of superiors without exterior or even interior reasoning.

A religious who arrives at this degree persuades himself, except in extremely rare and evidently opposite cases, that the thing commanded is better in itself, or at least for him, than its contrary.

376. What are the qualities of obedience of judgment?

Obedience of judgment is :

1° " *Indifferent* to all that a Director may command. " (B. DE LA SALLE.)

2° *Simple,* that is, doing simply what is commanded, and because it is commanded, without troubling ourselves why it is commanded, nor how we are to execute it; even renouncing all thoughts which may arise in our minds on the subject. " (Id.)

3° *Blind,* " without paying attention whether the thing be good or bad, unless it be evidently contrary to the commandments of God; and when the thing will appear as improperly commanded, or that any thought would arise in our minds that might make us take this view, we must not entertain or adhere to such thought..., because we cannot do a thing so well, nor can we do anything more perfect than the will of God..., which is infallibly made known to us by the command of our Directors, according to these

words of the Gospel : *He that heareth you, heareth Me.* (St Luke, x., 16.) " (Id.)

377. Why must we rise to the obedience of judgment ?

Because, without such obedience, that of execution and that of the will can hardly be maintained. It would certainly be difficult to obey promptly and entirely, if the mind were to disapprove of the command; to obey in a cordial and respectful manner, were we to regard the command as in bad taste, not properly given or understood.

Obedience of judgment, in immolating to God all that is best in us, prevents rapine in our holocaust, and guarantees that nothing be wanting in the homage that by our vow we have made to God of our whole soul.

378. Does obedience of judgment prevent us from making the representations that we believe to be legitimate ?

Perfect obedience does not prevent a religious from making the representations which he believes to be well founded and legitimate; in some cases, this may even be his duty (321). A superior needs to be informed of what he does not know, and he cannot but be pleased to be informed. But the representations of inferiors should always be most modest and respectful, and made with the disposition of adhering fully and tranquilly to what the superior may decide.

379. What does B. de la Salle say upon the excellence of obedience ?

" We may attribute to obedience what Solomon says of Wisdom : *All good things came to me together with her.* (Wisd., VII., 11.) For, he who obeys through the spirit of religion, possesses all the virtues. He is humble, because humility is necessary to be submissive; he is meek, because however painful the thing commanded, he will not complain; he is silent, because an obedient man seems to have lost the use of speech, having no desire save the doing, without reply, what is commanded; he is patient, because he suffers all, and bears all the burdens imposed upon him; he is charitable without reserve, because obedience makes him undertake all for the good of his neighbor...

" We should esteem it highly to be in a state which binds us to obedience, and we should look upon it as the mother and support of all other virtues. But, if we desire that it be thus, it is necessary to practise obedience with all possible perfection; for God grants this grace only to those who have no will of their own, and who look upon His will as the rule and principle of their whole conduct. " (Med. 12.)

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE SPECIAL VOWS IN THE INSTITUTE OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS.

Art. I. — *The vows added in this Institute to the ordinary vows.*

380. What are the two vows which the Brothers of the Christian Schools add to the ordinary vows of religion?

The vow of stability, and that of teaching the poor gratuitously.

381. Why do the Brothers add the vow of stability?

Every religious, by the very fact of making his vows, engages himself to persevere in his Institute. The special vow of stability which the Brothers make, seems, therefore, to have for its object, to fortify them more strongly against the illusion which might induce them to aspire to the priesthood, or to wish to enter a more perfect Order.

382. Why do the Brothers make the vow of teaching gratuitously?

The vow of teaching gratuitously harmonizes with the end for which the Brothers of the Christian Schools have been established.

Various Institutes, in the same way, make a special vow, according to the end they have in view; thus, the religious of St Camillus de Lellis add to the ordinary vows that of attending the sick.

383. What other vow did the Brothers make in the beginning of their Institute?

In the beginning, the B. de la Salle and his disciples made, in an explicit manner, the vow of keeping schools *by association.*

384. What was then the reason of this vow?

The vow of *association* was necessary whilst the Institute was in a state of formation, and had not yet an approved Rule. It was as a provisional measure to give cohesion and vitality to the corporation of teachers who united together to keep schools.

Other Founders of Institutes had imposed analogous vows upon their first disciples.

385. Has the Bull of Approbation granted by Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XIII., preserved the vow of *association?*

No, the Bull reads, section 9 : " That the vows of the Brothers be those of chastity, poverty, obedience, and perseverance in the Institute, and

of teaching the poor gratuitously. " It does not mention the vow of association.

386. Why is the vow of association no longer found among the vows prescribed by the Bull of Approbation?

The Institute being once approved, the vow of association no longer had any reason for existence. The Brothers henceforth bind themselves to an Institute, which, according to the Bull itself, could not teach school except by association.

This Institute had received its form, its definitive constitution, from the Bull given by His Holiness the Pope. The vow of association became henceforth as a chain once destined to unite the various elements, and which is rejected as superfluous when these elements form a body by perfect cohesion.

387. Does not the formula of the vows seem to imply the vow of association?

The formula of the vows, it is true, contains these words : "And for this purpose, I, N... promise and make vow to *live in society* with the Brothers of the Christian Schools. " But it cannot be concluded from these words that *association* is the object of a special vow for the Brothers; for the formula then reads : " *Therefore,* " in other words, for the purpose of practically realizing my donation to, and my association with the Institute, " *I make vow of poverty, chastity, obedience..., conformably to the Bull of Approbation of our Institute*, etc. "

The vows made in the second part of the for-

mula, therefore, determine in a concrete and precise manner the general preceding promise, but this general promise does not constitute a special vow.

Art. II. — *The vow of stability.*

388. What is the vow of stability?

The vow of stability is an engagement by which a Brother of the Christian Schools obliges himself to remain fixedly in his Institute during the whole time for which he makes the vow, that is, during his whole life, if the vow be perpetual; during three years or one year, if the vow be triennial or annual.

389. What sin does he commit who violates his vow of stability?

He commits a sin against the *virtue of religion* in transgressing his vow, and this is a sacrilege (434). Ordinarily, he also commits another fault against *charity*, by the scandal caused to his Brothers and even people of the world by his desertion. He also sins against the charity he owes to himself, by the grave peril to which he exposes his soul (60).

390. When the vow of stability is but temporary, can a religious, with safety to his conscience, withdraw when the time has expired?

If a religious withdraw after the expiration of the time, he evidently does not sin against the

vow; but he may be grievously culpable by the wrong he does to himself (60).

391. Can a Brother, notwithstanding his vow of stability, leave his Institute to enter a more perfect Order?

The vow of stability binds a Brother to his Institute: he cannot, therefore, leave it, even to enter a more perfect Order, without the express consent of the Superior General.

Moreover, this desire of entering a more perfect Order is ordinarily but an illusion arising from inconstancy or self-love (120).

392. What does the Bull of Approbation say on this subject?

" We will, that henceforth and forever none of the Brothers of this Institute may lawfully leave the said Institute, or return to the world, even under pretext of embracing a more severe Order, without the express consent of the Superior General. "

393. May a Brother aspire to the priesthood?

No; the Rule is formal on this subject (Chap. I., 2), and the Bull says expressly (section 7): " That none of the Brothers shall strive after the priesthood, nor aspire to any other ecclesiastical order. "

394. What has the recent Council of Baltimore decreed on this subject?

" Among the Congregations of men, who, in various parts of this country, not less than in

Europe and in other countries, consecrate to the education of Christian youth the efforts of a pious and devout zeal, a deserving and special tribute of praise is due to the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Pope Benedict XIII. desired in his day to promote the progress and stability of this Congregation : the Bull of Approbation *In apostolicæ dignitatis solio,* decreed, that no Brother, even under the pretext of embracing a more strict Order, can leave his Institute without the express consent of the Superior General. Now, the Fathers of the Council desire, as a pledge of their good will towards the religious of this beautiful Institute, to protect as far as possible its Rules and its Constitutions, and, at the same time, second the intentions of the Holy See, which are, that these religious do not aspire to the priesthood. Wherefore, they decree that no subject, who, having pronounced his first vows in this Congregation and shall subsequently have left it for any cause whatsoever, can, without dispensation from the Sacred Congregation, be admitted as a candidate to Holy Orders in the seminaries of our ecclesiastical provinces. "

Art. III. — *The vow of teaching gratuitously.*

395. What vow corresponds specially to the end of the Brothers of the Christian Schools?

The vow of teaching the poor gratuitously.

396. What is to be observed on the obligation of teaching gratuitously in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools?

The Institute has assumed the obligation of teaching poor children gratuitously, and, by the vow, it has contracted this obligation as something distinctive and essential.

397. What obligation does this vow impose?

Not to receive anything for the instruction given to poor children, either from the children themselves, or from their parents.

398. What fault would a Brother commit who would receive for himself personnally a retribution from a poor pupil?

He would sin : 1° against the vow of gratuity, and the fault would be more or less grievous, according to the gravity or lightness of the matter; 2° against the vow of poverty, which forbids a religious to receive anything whatsoever, without a regular permission.

399. May a Director receive from a poor pupil some retribution for the community?

He cannot do so (412). He would violate the vow of teaching gratuitously, if through himself

or through another, he would receive for the community any retribution from a poor pupil. He would, moreover, be guilty of scandal towards his Brothers and of abusing his authority, all of which are so many aggravating circumstances.

400. Is he who has violated his vow of gratuity obliged to restore what he has received?

No, at least, not to the pupil or his parents, because, rigorously speaking, he has not violated *justice* in their regard. However, he would do well to return to them what he has received, being careful to take the necessary precautions to protect the honor of religion, or to return to them an equivalent with the necessary permission.

The violation of gratuitous teaching would become an offence against justice, in the particular case in which the endowment of this gratuitous teaching would be a formal condition.

401. What does the Bull of Approbation say in section 5 on gratuitous teaching?

The Bull of Approbation, in section 5, says in a general manner : " That the Brothers teach the children free of charge, and that they receive neither money nor presents that may be offered them by their pupils or their parents. " The Bull hereby confirms what the Rules prescribe (chap. VII., 11) : " The Brothers shall not receive either from the pupils or their parents any money or presents, however small. "

The general Chapter of 1787 enjoins upon the Directors (art. 24) to refuse strictly, and to cause

the Brothers of their respective houses to refuse all presents, payment or gratuitous services from the pupils or their parents.

402. What connection is there in the Bull between section 5 and section 9 in which the obligation of teaching gratuitously is imposed?

Section 5 defines briefly a general principle in the life and devotedness of the Brothers. Section 9 guarantees the practical realization of this principle by imposing the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously.

403. What difference between the extent of the vow prescribed by section 9 of the Bull, and that of the Rule of section 5?

The vow imposes the obligation of teaching the poor gratuitously.

The Rule prescribes the obligation of teaching children gratuitously, whoever they be, rich or poor, and of not receiving either money or presents offered by the pupils or their parents.

404. What difference is there, from a conscientious point of view, between the Rule and the vow?

The vow obliges under the penalty of mortal sin, if we offend in a grave matter.

The Rule does not oblige under the penalty of sin. But, as this is an *essential* Rule, confirmed by the Bull of Our Holy Father the Pope, we cannot offend against it without committing an irregularity which is more serious than the violation of other Rules. Moreover, of this Rule above all, it may be observed, that it is almost impossible

to offend against it, without, through other motives falling into some sin (150).

405. How can we easily fall into some sin by violating gratuitous teaching, even when doing so only with regard to the Rule?

The violation of gratuitous teaching, even if only with regard to the Rule, can hardly take place, without through other motives, committing some sin. For this violation would frequently expose us to the violation of poverty itself; it would be setting a bad example to the Brothers and, at times, even to seculars; it would easily lead the teacher to partiality, unjust preferences, etc.

If he who transgresses the Rule of gratuitous teaching were a Director, he would render himself guilty of scandal in violating an *essential* Rule, a violation committed by the very person who, in the community, is the representative and the official guardian of the Rules (102).

406. Why do you say that this Rule is essential to the Institute?

Because the Founder has declared it such in a formal manner, and because it has always been the tradition of the Institute itself.

407. What does B. de la Salle say on the subject of gratuitous teaching?

Blessed de la Salle is very explicit on this subject: "The Brothers, he says in his Rule, will everywhere teach schools gratuitously, and this is *essential* to their Institute." (Chap. VII., 1.) He

repeats the same thing under various forms in his writings, and especially in his Meditations 92, 153, etc.

408. How has this tradition of the Institute with regard to gratuitous teaching been confirmed?

1° By the jealous care with which the Institute has maintained gratuitous teaching during two centuries.

2° By the profound emotion produced among the Brothers whenever any legislative measures assailed gratuitous teaching.

3° By the closing of various schools in which, in an indirect way, measures were to be taken to establish payment by the pupils who were reputed rich.

4° By the care which has always been taken to ask for a dispensation from the Holy Father whenever imperious circumstances required that there might be, temporarily, a departure in anything from the Rule of gratuitous teaching.

409. Why did B. de la Salle make gratuitous teaching an essential Rule of the Institute?

For the purpose, as he himself says, "of procuring the advantage of Christian education for the children of tradesmen and the poor" (Rules, I.), who, without this gratuitous teaching, would frequent schools only in small numbers.

This gratuitous teaching being for all, rich and poor, the latter are not mortified in being unable to pay for the teaching they receive. It leaves, moreover, to the teacher the halo of perfect disinterested-

ness. The pupils see in him only the man of God, devoting himself and sacrificing himself, to make of them good Christians and citizens. They love him, they respect and obey him so much the more willingly, as gratuitous teaching places him the more beyond the suspicion of partiality, and is a better safeguard to his moral authority.

410. What is to be thought of certain objections raised against the principle of teaching gratuitously?

These objections are without foundation ; to be convinced of this, it is sufficient to be reminded, that :

1° The B. de la Salle has established the principle of gratuitous teaching, as other Founders before him had established it for the care of the sick, for the education of children, or for other works of charity.

2° The Church, by the infallible organ of Our Holy Father the Pope, has approved and sanctioned this gratuitous teaching, by making it a Rule for the Brothers, and prescribing it even by a vow.

3° We may avail ourselves in favor of establishing gratuitous teaching, of what is done by the very enemies of Christian education. They have made instruction *gratuitous* in their schools in order to assure their success, and experience has but too well proved that they have not failed in their choice of the means.

411. Since the Rule embodied in section 5 of the Bull of Approbation does not oblige under the penalty of sin,

why has recourse always been had to the Holy See, when circumstances have, for a time, forced a departure from it?

Because the Institute is approved by the Holy See, and that claim could no longer be maintained if, upon so important a point, it would of itself depart from the provisions of the Bull of Approbation. It has, therefore, been with much reason, that whenever exceptional circumstances have required it, the Superiors have had recourse to the Holy See to obtain a dispensation from gratuitous teaching, even when there was question of teaching only rich children.

And it should be observed, that this gratuity has been judged so advantageous, and so important by the Holy See, that, more than once, it has placed restrictions to the petition which it was thought necessary to make.

412. Is the obligation of teaching gratuitously imposed upon individuals alone, or also upon the community?

This obligation is imposed equally upon individuals and the community. It falls upon the community, not directly, but simultaneously and inseparably, by the very force of the obligation that binds each individual.

413. In what sense is this obligation imposed upon the community?

In this sense, that no retribution, no gift, contrary to the prescriptions of the Bull, can be received in the name of the community, either by a particular teacher, or by the Director, or by anyone outside of the community.

414. What is it that proves the obligation of gratuitous teaching by the community?

The fact that if this obligation were not imposed upon the community for the same reason as upon individuals, it could thereby have no object. For gratuitous teaching is established in favor of the children who frequent our schools; but, how could it be said that they are taught gratuitously, if instead of paying an individual, they were to pay the community?

It must further be observed, that if the vow of teaching gratuitously had reference only to the individual Brothers, it would appear superfluous, because the vow of poverty already prevents a religious from receiving anything whatsoever and from anyone whomsoever for himself personally.

415. What is it that confirms the obligation of gratuitous teaching for the community?

Whenever grave and exceptional circumstances have obliged the Superiors of the Institute to request of the Holy See a local or temporary dispensation from any one of the obligations of gratuitous teaching, the request has been made for the community, and the dispensation accorded in view of the community. In this matter, there has never been any request made or dispensation granted for individuals, for which purpose moreover, there would be no reason, since they are already bound by the vow of poverty.

416. What is to be observed of the use to be made of dispensations relative to gratuitous teaching?

In the first place, they cannot be used except for the time and within the limits indicated by the Indult.

In the second place, they must never make us lose sight of the spirit of the Institute; hence, they should be used only in so far as it may be necessary, always keeping ourselves in perfect disinterestedness, in sincere love for poor children, and conforming strictly to what, in such cases, is wisely laid down by the Superiors.

True disciples of B. de la Salle always preserve in the bottom of their hearts, a special love for that gratuitous teaching so dear to their Blessed Father; they avail themselves but with regret and with the greatest discretion of the dispensations at times necessitated by the misfortunes of our age, and they sigh for the moment when, circumstances having changed, they may joyfully resume the holy obligations of their Rules.

417. May retribution be received in boarding-schools without violating the vow of gratuitous teaching?

Yes, in these establishments, retribution being required in view of the expenses of maintenance, etc., is unquestioned, that is, not embraced in the vow of teaching gratuitously.

Blessed de la Salle himself directed such establishments, in conditions analogous to those of the boarding-schools established after him; and the Institute, so jealous of its Rules on gratui-

tous teaching, has always had boarding-schools from the beginning. Finally, in order to remove all doubt, a Rescript of Our Holy Father, Pope Leo XII., dated March 21, 1825, has, on this point, sanctioned the traditional practice of the Institute.

418. Does the vow of teaching the poor *gratuitously* imply in itself the obligation *of teaching?*

The vow rigorously refers but to gratuity itself. It is this gratuity, properly so called, which, upon the petition of the Brothers, the Sovereign Pontiff wished to make by a vow the distinctive and essential characteristic of the schools of the Institutes.

The obligation of teaching is not in itself for the Brothers the object of a vow. It is, moreover, sufficiently imposed upon them by the very nature of their vocation, by their Rules and by the Bull of Approbation, in which we read (section I), " that they should above all things make it their occupation to instruct children, especially poor children, in all things pertaining to their leading a good and Christian life; the distinguishing trait, and, so to speak, the spirit of their Institute, being zeal for the education of youth, according to the rules of the Christian law. "

419. How does the obligation of teaching become a duty of conscience?

This obligation is for the Brothers a professional duty, an important rule which they cannot

neglect, ordinarily speaking, without committing a fault. They are, in a manner, charged with the care of the souls of the children confided to them; if they do not bring them up in a Christian manner, God will require of them a rigorous account.

Moreover, the founders of schools pay the teachers in view of the Christian teaching which the latter are to give; it would be an act of injustice not to comply faithfully with these pious intentions.

420. What does B. de la Salle say on the subject of gratuitous teaching?

" You cannot go too far in your disinterestedness in your employment, because it is the poor you have to teach; instruct them by your example; and, in order to teach them how to love poverty, let disinterestedness make you practise it as much as it may be pleasing to God. You know also that you have engaged yourself to teach school gratuitously; let everyone, therefore, be careful never to accept anything, either from the pupils or from their parents." (Med. 153.)

CHAPTER VIII.

ON DISPENSATION FROM VOWS.

421. Who has the power of dispensing from simple vows of religion?

Dispensation from simple vows of religion is an act of jurisdiction which belongs by right to Bishops, or to the Holy See when so reserved.

422. Has the Holy See reserved to itself the dispensation from the vows of the Brothers of the Christian Schools?

The Holy See has reserved to itself, in the Bull of Approbation (sections 8 and 9), the dispensation from the vows, either perpetual or temporary, made by the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

423. What is necessary that a dispensation from vows may be legitimate?

It is necessary that the reasons for asking it be just reasons.

424. Is a dispensation valid, if obtained through fraud?

A dispensation obtained by undue means, or by false representations, is null and void.

425. What is to be said of the dispensation granted to a religious in consequence of a grave fault he has committed?

The dispensation of such a religious is valid; but he should do what depends upon him to obtain the revocation of that dispensation, or to enter another Order, in order to correspond to the grace of his vocation to the religious state.

If the religious has committed the fault with the intention of obtaining his dispensation, or in spite of his foreseeing that he would be sent away, then there will have been a double sin for him: that of the fault committed, and that of the deliberate infidelity with regard to his engagements. Though freed by reason of his dispensation, there still remains for him the obligation of doing what he can to correspond to the grace of his vocation.

426. Is a dispensation obtained without sufficient reason valid?

A dispensation obtained without sufficient reason is null and void; and he who asks for it commits a sin, if he act with knowledge of the cause.

The spiritual Directory of the Trappists says: "It must be admitted that the Church, obliged to watch over the various interests confided to her solicitude, sometimes grants dispensations of tolerance. He who obtains them, does so at his risk and peril; if he has acted against his conscience in his demand, the dispensation that unbinds him before men does not loosen him before God, but quite on the contrary."

427. What sin does he commit who asks for a dispensation without sufficient reason?

St Alphonsus Liguori is formal on this matter. He says: "He that leaves without reason must be persuaded that he does so in the state of mortal sin."

428. What reasons are ordinarily given for asking dispensation from vows?

Generally, the necessities of parents or illness. Rarely is either of these motives a sufficient reason for dispensation.

429. What must the necessity of parents be to justify a religious in asking for dispensation from his vows?

To justify the asking for dispensation, the necessities of a father or mother must be grave. It is also necessary that the religious, once dispensed, be able to help them efficaciously.

430. May illness be a just motive for a religious to ask for dispensation?

Yes; but the case is very rare, and the religious, in order not to be deceived, should abide in this matter by the judgment of his superiors.

St Liguori says: "I pity those who say: My health suffers in the Congregation. Do they therefore expect that the Congregation will make them immortal, or exempt them from illness?

"What should be the principal object of him who enters among us, if not to render himself agreeable to God, and to die a holy death in the Congregation?"

431. What are ordinarily the true causes that lead a religious to ask for dispensation?

There are two principal causes: pride and sensuality. Either of these is little calculated to justify us before God; yet they are, ordinarily, the true and only motives which lead to a request for a dispensation. We put forth the necessities of parents or sickness only to impose upon ourselves or upon others.

432. How does pride lead to the loss of vocation?

Pride may be wounded because we are not appointed to such or such an employment; it may revolt, because we are deposed from a position, have met a humiliation, a contradiction or a reproach. It arouses jealousy, disobedience, cabals, contempt of authority, and soon a distaste for one's Institute and the loss of vocation.

433. How does sensuality become a cause of infidelity?

Sensuality first produces carelessness and tepidity, then the seeking of one's ease and gratification of the senses. We fall away little by little; we violate poverty and regularity; we lay aside or avoid all that opposes our perverted nature. The soul becomes blind, the passions are aroused, and the unfortunate sensual wretch becomes their slave and their victim.

434. May a religious, who, notwithstanding his vows, has left his Institute of his own accord, receive the sacraments?

He cannot do so as long as he remains in violation of his vows. Besides, being still bound by

his vows, he sins every time he fails in what these vows impose.

Such a religious must return to his Institute, or, if the Institute will not again receive him, he must procure a regular dispensation, unless he can obtain admission to another Institute.

The same obligations would be imposed upon one who might have left with temporary vows only. At the same time, when the period of his engagements has expired, there is no longer any reason for him to ask for a dispensation.

435. When a religious is sent away, is he, by that fact, dispensed from his vows?

A religious who has the misfortune of being sent away, is not on this account dispensed from his vows, except in the case in which the contrary is stipulated by the Rules, which does not happen in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

He is, as much as that may be possible, bound by the obligations of the religious state; but he loses the right of wearing the habit of his Institute.

With regard to the vow of poverty, he should have an understanding with the Ordinary. Certain latitude will certainly be given him, but he should avoid excessive and superfluous expenses.

He is obliged to observe his vow of chastity just as if he had not been sent away.

With regard to the vow of obedience, the Bishop is substituted for his superiors, and may, in the things which the latter could prescribe, command him as his religious superior.

What is ordinarily most expedient for religious sent away, is to obtain their dispensation, if they cannot enter another Institute.

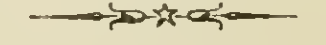
436. In what condition is a religious when he has once received dispensation from his vows?

In the condition of a simple Christian in the world, however, with the restrictions which may result from the conditions which are imposed in the Rescript of the dispensation, and to which he is in conscience bound to conform.

He may also have before God other particular obligations resulting from the motives of his withdrawal (425).

437. What must a religious do, who, having lost his vocation, yet wishes to save his soul?

He must accept his sufferings and remorse in expiation of his infidelity, fulfil the duties of a good Christian, and apply himself carefully to the observance of the commandments.



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